THE VICTORIOUS BANNER

Alexander R. Gordon

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THE VICTORIOUS BANNER

ALEXANDER R. GORDON, D.D.

THE VICTORIOUS BANNER

STORIES OF THE EXODUS RETOLD FOR YOUNG FOLK

BY

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TO

REV. ROBERT AND MRS. URQUHART

PREFACE

The cordial welcome given to my stories from Genesis had led me to continue the series. The present book carries us through the Exodus to the conquest of Palestine. We may not here move in so enchanted a region. But the tale is of the kind that young folk delight in, a tale of camps and marches and battles, full of dramatic incidents, with a rich bearing on life.

I have taken the title from the name which Moses gave to the altar he set up at Rephidim: *The Lord Is My Banner.* Under this banner he fought and won. Under the same banner we also can fight and win.

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THE VICTORIOUS BANNER

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I

THE BABE IN THE BASKET

ONE of the pleasures of our summer days in the country is playing with rushes. We pluck them tall and straight from their beds beside the brooks. Then we weave them into canes, and rattles, and baskets, and other wonderful things. But I am sure none of us ever attempted to make a cradle of rushes. Yet that is what a Hebrew mother once did for her baby.

It happened long after Joseph died. The children of Israel had now become so many that the land was filled with them. But a new king ruled over Egypt, who forgot what Joseph had done for his people. This was Rameses the Second, one of the most famous of the Pharaohs. He had won great victories in war, and adorned Egypt with splendid palaces and temples. But he was afraid lest more powerful enemies should attack him, and join with the Hebrews in driving him from the throne. So he built two strong fortresses, Pithom and Rameses, on the border of Goshen. And he

compelled the Hebrews to work as his slaves in digging foundations, and pounding mortar, and making bricks for the building. In this way he hoped to break their spirit, and keep down their numbers. But the worse he treated them, the more they multiplied and grew. Then Pharaoh did a terrible thing. He sent an order through Egypt that every little son born in a Hebrew home should be thrown into the Nile.

Now there was a Hebrew family living quite near the palace. The father's name was Amram, the mother's Jochebed. They had a fine big daughter, Miriam, old enough to help with the work. They had also a stirring boy of three, called Aaron, who made the house ring with laughter and talk. Then came another son, born just after Pharaoh had sent out the cruel order about the children. He was a beautiful baby, with large eyes and a bright, winning face. Jochebed could not bear to fling him into the river. So she hid him for three months at home. When she could no longer hide him, she gathered some of the stout Egyptian rushes known as papyrus, wove them into a basket, and daubed it with bitumen, to make it a floating cradle for the child. Then she wrapped him in soft, warm clothes, placed him in the basket, and laid it among the reeds by the river's edge. And she left Miriam to watch over her brother, while she went back to pray that God would have mercy upon him.

When we were babies, there was no cruel king who wished to do us harm. Everyone loved us. Everyone was good to us. Tender hands laid us in a cosy cradle, decked with pretty ribbons.

Sweet voices soothed us to sleep. Loving eyes looked down on us. When we woke up, strong arms held us in their embrace. Our tears were kissed away, and our childish ailments gently healed. All our wants were cheerfully attended to. Yet we were as dependent on God's care as little Moses was. Without His help we could not have drawn a single breath. He it was that gave us to our parents, He that filled their hearts with such love to us, He that has made so many good things to follow us all our life long. How grateful, then, we should be for His kindness, and how eager to please Him in what we do!

"Kind angels guard me every night,
As round my bed they stay;
Nor am I absent from Thy sight
In darkness or by day.

"My health and friends and parents dear
To me by God are given;
I have not any blessing here
But what is sent from heaven.

"Such goodness, Lord, and constant care
A child can ne'er repay;
But may it be my daily prayer
To love Thee and obey."

ANN GILBERT.

II

A MOTHER'S CARE

IT was not long before Jochebed's prayer was answered. As Miriam watched, she saw a company of ladies walking towards the river. It was Pharaoh's daughter, with her maids, coming down to bathe. Old writers tell us that her name was Meri, which sounds like our own beautiful Mary. Though her father was so cruel a man, she had a heart full of love and pity for everyone in trouble. So when she saw the basket floating among the reeds, she sent a maid to fetch it. Eagerly she opened the lid, and there was the baby, his sweet wee face bedewed with tears. She knew at once that it must be one of the Hebrews' children. But, in spite of her father's order, she took him in her arms, kissed him fondly, and made up her mind to adopt him as her son. And she called his name Moses, which means, "Drawn from the river."

At first, however, she was puzzled what to do with him. For she knew nothing about the care of little children. As she stood wondering, Miriam ran up, and smilingly asked if she might bring a Hebrew woman to nurse him. And when the princess gave her permission, she went and fetched his mother. And the princess said to her, "Take this child, and nurse him for me, and I will give thee

wages." So with a beating heart Jochebed received her son back again. And she kept him at home till he was four or five years old.

We can imagine how happy the home would now be. It was only a rough mud cabin. But love made it a very heaven upon earth. How gaily would Jochebed sing, as she danced her baby in her arms, or carried him on her shoulder, while she went about her work. And how pleased Miriam would be, when she handed him over for a little to her care. When Moses was big enough to run about, what fun Aaron and he would have! Boys and girls in Egypt had their toys, just as we have. We can see them still in the Museums: balls of leather or porcelain, hoops, dolls of many shapes, some of them jointed like our own favourites, and models of all kinds of animals, such as cats and dogs, monkeys, lions, elephants and the rest. We may be sure that Pharaoh's daughter would keep the boys well supplied with the finest that could be got. I do not suppose they cared much for dolls. But they would take great delight in the animals. And sometimes, no doubt, they would break them up, to see how they were made. In sunny weather they would be out of doors, trundling their hoops, or playing at ball, or scampering over the fields, aglow with brightly coloured poppies, daisies, and buttercups. Or they would spend their hours by the river, digging mud houses and castles, pretending to be great builders and famous soldiers.

Jochebed was glad to see them enjoy their fun. For she believed that boys should be boys. But she was very careful about one thing. Too many

of her people had forgotten the Lord. But she belonged to a family that feared and honoured Him. The name Jochebed means, "The Lord is my glory." Her mother had given her the name as a motto to live by. She had tried to be worthy of it. And now that she had children of her own, she brought them up in the same faith. When the day's work was over, she would gather them about her, and tell them the grand old stories of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. As they listened spellbound, she would teach them that the God of their fathers was their God too, and would recall how good He had been to them in saving Moses' life. Then she would make them all stand up, and with hands lifted reverently to heaven repeat after her a simple prayer.

Moses had soon to leave his mother's home. But he never forgot the lessons he had learned from her lips. No true boy ever does. He may be away at school or in business, but often and often, when he is lonely or tempted, his mother's words come back to him, and he feels stronger and better. And at the end of life, when all other lessons seem to fade from the memory, these remain fresh and warm. You remember the splendid old Doctor in Ian Maclaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush.* His life had been a busy one. Very seldom had he found time to go to Church. But every night he knelt at his bedside, and offered up the prayer his mother had taught him. And when he was dying, it was from her Bible that he asked his friend Drumsheugh to read to him. With flickering breath he repeated her favourite Psalm, "The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want."

And as he finished the last verse, he appeared to see her coming to him, with a light in her hand, to kiss him good-night before he fell asleep.

"They say that man is mighty,
He governs land and sea,
He wields a mighty sceptre
O'er lesser powers that be;
But a mightier power and stronger
Man from his throne has hurled,
For the hand that rocks the cradle
Is the hand that rules the world."

W. R. WALLACE.

III

AT SCHOOL IN EGYPT

MOSES was now old enough to go with the princess, to be brought up as her son. He would be dressed in fine linen clothes, and given a room in the palace, with plenty of servants to attend to him. Soon he would be sent to school. The Egyptians had many excellent schools. Some were public schools, open to all. Others were royal schools, held in the palace itself, and confined to the children of Pharaoh and his highest nobles. To one of these royal schools Moses would be sent, and here he would begin his education under the best masters in Egypt.

School opened at sunrise, and went on till noon, when the boys were let out to play. Like ourselves, they learned first to read and write. But they had no such simple alphabet as we have. Their letters were beautifully drawn pictures—an eagle for *a*, an owl for *m*, a duck for *s*, a chicken for *w*, and so on. Many of the copybooks in which the boys did their writing lessons are preserved in the Museums. Some are very neatly done, while others are rough and blotted, with corrections made by the teacher on the margin or along the top of the page. We may be quite certain that Moses did his best to learn quickly. He would then be able to read the splendid literature of

Egypt, and to enjoy the fairy tales, histories, books of travel and adventure, ballads, and songs, which are still a delight to scholars who know them.

Besides reading and writing, the boys were taught simple arithmetic, and the elements of algebra and geometry. But still more attention was paid to good conduct. In all the schools, both public and royal, the pupils were carefully trained to be diligent, truthful, honest, kindly, and respectful. The Egyptians had a number of books, called *Instructions,* which laid down rules for the guidance of the young. Among these rules we read the following:

"Spend no day in idleness."

"Give thy heart to learning, and love her like a mother, for there is nothing so precious as learning."

"Speak truth, do what is right, for it is great, it is mighty, it is enduring."

"Be kind to the widow and orphan, and feed the starving animals of the desert."

"Never forget to be respectful, and do not sit down while another stands who is older than thou."

Above all, the children were taught to honour their parents. Two of their best known rules were:

"Never forget what thy mother hath done for thee."

"How good it is when a son obeys his father."

Rameses himself had this motto written on the walls of his temple at Abydos:

"The most beautiful thing to behold, the best

to hear, is a child with a thankful heart that beats for its father."

When they left school, the cleverest lads went on to College. There they learned higher mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, and law. They were well grounded also in music and drawing. But their chief interest was in religion. The Egyptians had various sacred books, which the students were expected to know as thoroughly as we know the Bible. These books tell us all about the gods they worshipped, and the duties men owed to them. It is certainly a very strange religion we find here. The Egyptians worshipped gods of the heaven and gods of the earth, gods of the mountain and gods of the river, gods of the trees and gods of the field. They worshipped their Pharaohs, they worshipped their dead ancestors, they even worshipped the mummies, or dried bodies, of crocodiles, cows, cats, and many other animals. And the way they worshipped them was by laying out quantities of food and drink upon their altars, bringing them gifts of clothing and money, singing and dancing for their entertainment, and praying to them for help in times of need.

All this was very different from the simple faith Moses had learned at his mother's knee. Yet there was much that was good in the religion of the Egyptians. Their most sacred text, *The Book of the Dead,* describes the Last Judgment, when the souls of the dead are brought for trial before the god Osiris. Each one confesses the good or evil he has done in the world. Then his heart is put on a pair of scales, and weighed against the image

of Truth. If the heart is heavy enough, he is raised to the glories of heaven. If not, he is cast into burning fire. And what counts with Osiris is simple justice, kindness, and mercy. The man who would win the god's favour must be able to say:

"I did not kill. I did not steal. I did not speak lies to anyone. I did not stir up strife. I did not revile my neighbour. My heart did not covet. I did not blaspheme the gods. I gave bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, and a ferry-boat to him that was without one. I am a man of pure mouth and pure hands, to whom 'Welcome, welcome!' was said by those who saw me."

The aim of the Egyptian teachers was thus to turn out good men, with strong minds and a pure heart. But they did not forget the training of the body. They believed, as we do, that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." So they encouraged their pupils to spend the afternoon in sport. The younger boys would still find amusement enough with their hoops and balls, their romps and races. The older lads were taught swimming and gymnastics. If they wished for quieter games, they had ninepins and checkers. The students at College were made to practise lifting and throwing weights, fencing and wrestling, fishing and hunting, archery, and other manly exercises. They also received a course in military drill, and had to take their part in sham fights by land and water.

We have gone far beyond the Egyptians in many

points, but we still have something to learn from them. Our teachers are often tempted to give all their attention to the mind. But the training of the character is yet more important. And both depend largely on our physical health. So the good teacher will develop body, mind, and soul alike. Dr. Arnold of Rugby was the first great English headmaster to take this broad view of education. He loved learning. He was equally fond of sport. He wished to have Rugby keep the lead along both these lines. But his chief ambition was to make it "a school of Christian gentlemen." And the result of his efforts is seen in the fine fellows we meet on the pages of *Tom Brown's School Days,* written by one of his favourite scholars. Thank God! there are now many splendid schools, where boys and girls are trained to be strong, brave, thoughtful, true-hearted, and pure. A school like this calls out our warmest loyalty, as "the best school of all." We love it when we are still at school. We are proud of it when we leave. We try always to do honour to it. And we are glad to go back, now and again, to revive the old affection.

"It's good to see the School we knew,
The land of youth and dream,
To greet again the rule we knew
Before we took the stream.

"Though long we've missed the sight of her,
Our hearts may not forget;
We've lost the old delight of her,
We keep her honour yet.

"We'll honour yet the School we knew,
The best School of all:
We'll honour yet the rule we knew,
Till the last bell call.

"For, working days or holidays,
And glad or melancholy days,
They were great days and jolly days
At the best School of all."

H. NEWBOLT.

IV

THE CALL OF COUNTRY

WE do not know how Moses occupied his time after he left College. The Jewish writer Josephus says he became a soldier, and led Pharaoh's troops to victory against the Ethiopians and other enemies. It is quite likely that he was a captain in the Egyptian army. No doubt, also, he would be a ruler over some part of the land. But all the time his heart was with his own people. We read that he used to visit them at their work, and that he was sorely grieved to see them ground down by their labours. He may even have asked Pharaoh to lighten their load. But Pharaoh would do nothing to help them. At last one day he found an Egyptian overseer beating a Hebrew workman. His anger was roused. So he looked this way and that; and when he saw there was no one near them he slew the Egyptian, and delivered the Hebrew out of his hands.

It was a rash act, and Moses had to suffer for his rashness. Yet it was the call of country, and in the Providence of God it proved the first step in setting the people free.

In the dark hour of Scottish oppression a young knight, Sir William Wallace, was walking through

the streets of Dundee. He met an English officer, who insulted both himself and his country. In fierce wrath Wallace struck him dead. He was pursued, outlawed, and driven to the hills. His home was burned, and his wife and child were slain. But this only drove the iron of patriotism deeper into his heart. And with a few heroic followers he raised the banner of Scottish Independence, and began that great struggle which brought his country not only freedom, but immortal glory and honour.

It was by just such deeds that William Tell, and Joan of Arc, and Washington, and Garibaldi, and the brave men who fought for us in France and Flanders, won the battles of freedom. They had each listened to the call of country:

"Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!—
Let us do or die!"

But it is not the soldier alone who hears the call. Robert Burns, the author of these heroic lines, was an Ayrshire ploughman. He could not fight, but he loved his country as ardently as any soldier. When he was quite a young lad, he hoped that he might be able at least to "sing a sang" for Scotland's sake. And in later life he wrote the poems which have helped more than brilliant victories to make his country "loved at home, revered abroad." Robert Browning loved England with an equal passion. He said to himself: "Here

and there did England help me,—how can I help England?" And he poured out the full strength of his poetic genius in singing the praise of England.

It was the same with the American poet Whittier. He loved the hills, and lakes, and streams, the green fields, and the quiet homesteads of New England. He loved the flag "with stars bedecked." His heart beat high when he read the story of the Pilgrim Fathers, the old Quaker Saints, and the heroes of the War of Independence. He wished to see their spirit of loyalty kept alive in the land. So during the great War for Freedom he sang those songs of Country and Liberty, Truth and Right, which stir the soul like a trumpet. And at the very end of his life he was still singing:

"O Land of lands! to thee we give
Our prayers, our hopes, our service free;
For thee thy sons shall nobly live,
And at thy need shall die for thee."

A great poet is even rarer than a great soldier. But happily there are other ways of serving our country. Some of us have recently been reading the *Life of Andrew Carnegie.* He was a poor Scottish boy, who went to America, and there became very rich. Though he loved America, he never ceased to love his native land. And on both of them he showered his gifts of libraries, and organs, and halls, and parks, which have done so

much to educate and refine the people. It is good when rich men spend their money in this way. But we do not need to be rich to show our love of country.

The most impressive part of the Armistice Day Celebrations of 1920 was the burial of an Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey. That was the Empire's tribute to the patriotism of the common soldier. We honour the generals who planned the campaign. But we see now that it was the courage of the rank and file which really won the war. And in times of peace as well it is the multitude of common men and women who do most for their country. Going about their duties in simple loyalty, they hold up her honour, and make her name respected through the world.

The Italian patriot, Luigi Settembrini, was lying in a foul prison at Naples. He expected next morning to be condemned to death. So he wrote to his wife telling her that he would die with the quiet courage of the martyr. Then he bade her kiss the children, and give them his last message, "To know and worship God; to love work; to love their country above all else." A father could leave his children no finer legacy than this. Our country has done much for us. And she expects the best of us in return. We can begin to serve her while we are still at school, by working hard and playing the game. And if we continue to act in this spirit, we shall be a credit to the land, and at the end we shall leave her better than we found her.

"Land of our birth, our faith, our pride,
For whose dear sake our fathers died:
O Motherland, we pledge to thee
Head, heart, and hand through the years to be."

RUDYARD KIPLING

V

A GALLANT KNIGHT

WHEN Moses had slain the Egyptian, he buried him hastily in the sand, and returned to the palace, thinking the deed would never be known. But the man whom he had rescued from the Egyptian began to talk about it. Next day Moses went back to visit his people, and found two of them quarrelling. As he watched, one struck the other a rough blow. Moses was much displeased. So he went up, and asked the man why he had struck his fellow. The man answered rudely, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" Moses was greatly alarmed when he knew that his secret was out. He was still more alarmed when he heard, from one of his friends, that it had reached the ears of Pharaoh. Very soon he learned that Pharaoh had sent out an order to slay him. So he got together some bread and a skin of water, and fled for safety to the desert of Midian.

It was a terrible journey. All about him there was nothing to be seen but sand, broken only by bare rocks and a few stunted shrubs. Above him blazed the pitiless sun, blistering and scorching him till he was ready to drop with faintness.

There was no track to guide him, no man to give him a friendly greeting, not even a bird to sing to him. The only sign of life would be a lizard or two gliding among the rocks. As he trudged on, day after day, the water in his skin began to fail, and his heart sank within him. Then to his joy he reached a well, and sat down beside it for rest and refreshment. In a little while seven young girls came along with their father's sheep, drew water from the well, and poured it into troughs for the sheep to drink. While they were busy with their work, some rude shepherds rushed down upon them, drove them away from the troughs, and were going to use them for their own sheep. Moses was indignant to see girls treated like this. So he rose to his feet, and flung himself between them and the shepherds. Though he had no weapon but his staff, he made so good a fight that the shepherds fled in terror. The girls were thus able to water their flocks in peace. But Moses was not content with having fought their battle. He helped them also with the watering, and did not sit down again till the work was finished.

It was a gallant act, like those of the knights we read about in *The Sleeping Beauty,* and in such great poems as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* or *Tennyson's Idylls of the King.*

You know how the knight was prepared for his task. As a boy at home, he was trained to fear God and honour the king, to be obedient to his parents, to love truth, and to be courteous and kind to everyone. Then he became a squire, or servant to a knight. When he was old enough to

be a knight himself, he went to Church, and remained one whole night upon his knees, praying to God for courage and strength. In the morning he was girt with sword and spurs, and took a vow to be loyal to king and country, to defend the right at all times, to maintain his honour, to speak the truth, to help the needy, and above all to protect women and children. Then he saddled his horse, and rode out in quest of adventures. He might go to Palestine, to fight as a Crusader. Or he might stay in his own country, to defend it against invasion. But wherever he went, he was true to his vow. He fought bravely and well. But he would rather die than lose his honour. He would not even take an unfair advantage of his enemy. Though hard pressed in battle, he never forgot to be chivalrous. And in times of peace, when there was no more fighting to be done, he would roam about as a knight-errant, looking for a chance of doing a good turn to someone, especially a woman or child who might be in trouble.

Chaucer has drawn a beautiful picture of the true knight, in his Prologue to the Canterbury Tales:

"A knight there was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the time that he first began
To riden out, he loved chivalry,
Truth and honour, freedom and courtesy.
Full worthy was he in his lordes war, . . .
And though that he was worthy, he was wise,
And of his port as meek as is a maid.
He never yet no villainy said he,
In all his life, unto no manner wight.
He was a very perfect gentle knight."

We no longer see knights on horseback riding up and down the land. But there are men of knightly spirit still among us. One of the noblest was Abraham Lincoln. He was born in a poor log cabin. He had little or no schooling. Till he was a grown man, he never mixed in fine society. But he was always the flower of chivalry. Like every other good thing, his chivalry began at home. His stepmother tells us, "Abe never gave me a cross look, and never refused, in fact or appearance, to do anything I requested him." When he went out to work, he soon became known as the truest, kindest, most obliging young fellow in the neighbourhood. He was always ready to put out a helping hand. Once at least he was seen in a friend's house, poring over his books, and rocking the baby's cradle with his foot. Many other stories are told of his courtesy to women and children. There was nothing he hated so much as rudeness or cruelty to the weak. Though he despised fighting, he would stand up to the biggest bully in their defence. His first sight of human slavery at New Orleans made him resolve to strike a deadly blow at that unholy thing. When afterwards he rose to great power, he remained the same kindly, courteous gentleman. He was always to be found on the side of the poor and oppressed. But though he fought hard on their behalf, he was scrupulously fair to his opponents. He would not allow his friends to put down a speaker who had attacked him bitterly. When war broke out, he waged it "with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right," but at the same time "with malice toward none, with charity to all." In the

midst of his own sorrows, he did what he could to lessen the sorrows of others. He even found time to answer the letters of little girls who wrote to him. On one occasion, when he was riding with some friends, he halted for a few minutes, to catch two young birds that had been blown from their nest, and to put them back again. And when his friends laughed at his tenderness of heart, he said, "I could not have slept unless I had restored those little birds to their mother."

In this order of knighthood we can all enlist. Many of us have already enlisted. We may be Boy Scouts; and the boy who is a good Scout is in full training as a knight. But whether we be Scouts or not, we ought all to obey the Scout Law, with its ten rules of knighthood:—

1. That we never break our honour.
2. That we be loyal to our king and country, our parents, officers, and employers.
3. That we try our best to do a good turn to somebody every day.
4. That we be friendly to all, accepting others as we find them, and making the best of them.
5. That we be courteous, that is, polite to everyone, but especially to women and children, old people, invalids, cripples, and so on.
6. That we be kind to animals, sparing them all unnecessary pain.
7. That we obey the orders of our parents and leaders without question, because it is our duty.
8. That we smile and whistle under all difficulties.
9. That we be thrifty, so as never to be a bur-

den to others, but rather be able to help them when in need.

10. That we be pure in thought, word, and deed. In short, that we be

"Trusty, loyal and helpful,
Brotherly, courteous, kind,
Obedient, smiling and thrifty,
Pure as the rustling wind."

SIR ROBERT BADEN-POWELL.

VI

A GOOD SHEPHERD

THE girls whom Moses had helped were the daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian. When they went home and told their father what the brave Egyptian had done for them, he was vexed that they had left him alone at the well, and bade them go back at once and invite him to have dinner with them. Moses gladly accepted the invitation. As they dined together, he charmed them all so much by his grace and courtesy that Jethro asked him to remain with him as his chief shepherd. Moses accepted this invitation also. Soon he married Jethro's daughter Zipporah, and settled down in Midian as one of the family.

It must have been a hard life for one accustomed to the luxuries of Egypt. His home was but a coarse black tent, very poorly furnished. The pastures where he tended his flocks were patches of thin grass on the edge of the desert. There Moses would pass the hours under a broiling sun, trying to keep his sheep from harm. Often the pastures would be burnt by the heat, and he would have to scour the desert in search of fresh ones. Or a foolish sheep would wander off among rocks and precipices, and he would have to go after it, through dangers of every kind, till he brought it back safe and sound to the fold.

In spite of all these hardships, Moses did his best to be a loyal servant to Jethro, and a good shepherd to the sheep. Jewish legend tells us how careful he was of his flocks, and how tender to the sick and the lambs. We can well believe it. A man of his knightly spirit would be kind to all God's creatures, and especially to the weak and suffering. He was kind to them because he loved them. And he looked for no reward but the happiness of doing good. Yet all the while God was quietly preparing him to be "shepherd" of His people Israel, to guide them through the desert to the rich, green pastures of Palestine. And, though Moses knew nothing about it, He was making him a prophecy of the Good Shepherd, who went into the wilderness to seek and to save the lost, carried them home rejoicing in His bosom, and at last laid down His life for them.

When our school days are over, we too must go to work. It may be shepherding or farming, or work in the office or the shop. At first we shall be put to quite simple, humble tasks. We often rebel at this, and want something bigger to do. Then we begin to lose interest in our work, and think only of our pay, and the amusement we get with it. But we can never hope to succeed in this way. Still less can we please God by what we do. He has given us our place in life, and He expects us to work faithfully and well. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

Two hundred years ago, there lived at Cremona in Italy a maker of violins, called Antonio Stradivari. He had an eye, he said, that winced at false work and loved the true. Long after

others had gone to rest, he would be found still polishing and varnishing his instruments, trying to make them as perfect as he could. Sometimes his companions asked him with a laugh,

"Were God at fault for violins, thou absent?"

The good man answered bravely:

"Yes! He were at fault for Stradivari's work.
If my hand slacked, I should rob God—
Leaving a blank instead of violins.
I say, not God Himself can make man's best
Without best men to help Him. 'Tis God gives skill,
But not without men's hands. He could not make
Antonio Stradivari's violins without Antonio."

So he went on with his work, believing that

"When any master holds a violin of mine,
He will be glad that Stradivari lived,
Made violins, and made them of the best.
The masters only know whose work is good;
They will choose mine, and while God gives them skill,
I give them instruments to play upon,
God choosing me to help them."

Stradivari had his reward. For every violinist now wishes a "Strad" to play upon. And as he touches that wonderful instrument, he thanks God in his heart "that Stradivari lived, made violins, and made them of the best."

But the noblest example of work is Jesus Christ. Though He was the Son of God, He worked for twenty years in the carpenter's shop. Often He

would have very trivial things to make, such as a wooden rivet for a plough, or a toy for a child. But He never complained that His work was beneath Him. We may be sure that all He made was of the best, every beam smoothly planed, every joint securely fixed, and every nail squarely driven. And just because He was faithful in that which is least, the Father called Him to be Lord of His kingdom, and Saviour of the world.

It is only by working as Jesus did that we win success in life. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." There is, indeed, no limit to the heights that one may reach by honest work. But the chief reward of work is found in itself. A bit of work well done sends a thrill of pleasure into the heart, like that which God enjoyed when He finished His work of Creation. And it pleases, not only ourselves, but all who see it. What is still better, it pleases God, who loves what is right.

"Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in any thing,
To do it as for Thee.

"All may of Thee partake:
Nothing can be so mean
Which with His tincture, 'For Thy sake,'
Will not grow bright and clean.

"A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.

"This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold;
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told."

GEORGE HERBERT.

VII

THE BURNING BUSH

THE years rolled on. Moses had now struck deep roots in Midian. He was happy at his work. He was still happier in his home. The love of Zipporah made his exile sweet for him. By this time, too, their home was filled with the music of young voices. For two sons had been born to them, Gershom, which means, "Stranger," and Eliezer, "My God is a help to me."

Though he had so much to gladden him, we can see that his heart turned back lovingly to the old home in Goshen. Even as he clasped his first child in his arms, he felt himself to be "a stranger in a strange land." And while he worked loyally with Jethro, he kept true to the memory of his mother's God. The memory had, no doubt, become rather dim with absence. But it lay like a spark of living fire in his breast. And God was to fan the spark into a pure, bright flame.

It was the hot summer time. The pastures of Midian were all parched by the sun. So Moses led his flock right across the desert to Sinai, or Horeb, "the mountain of God." As he reached the place, he caught sight of a bramble bush flooded with a glow of heavenly light. It appeared, in fact, as if the bush burned with fire, and yet was not consumed. Then Moses said to himself, "I will turn

aside now to see this great sight, and find out why the bush is not burned." As he drew near, he heard a voice from the midst of the bush, bidding him put off his sandals from his feet, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. Moses did as the voice commanded him. Then he hid his face in his hands, for he knew now that God was in the bush, and he was afraid to look upon Him. But the Lord called him by his name, and bade him not be afraid. Then He revealed to him His own name, Jehovah, the Eternal I AM, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," who would be the God of their children also "to all generations."

I think we can understand what the burning bush meant for Moses. It was the vision of God in Nature. Like Jacob, he used to imagine that God could be found only in his father's house. Now he saw that He was as near to him on the rugged slopes of Sinai. The sense he thus received of God's living presence never left him. As he gazed that night on the starry skies above him, he could sing with the Psalmist: "O Lord, our Lord, how resplendent is Thy name in all the earth!" In the morning, when the sun rose, he saw there also the vision of God's glory. Then he looked about him, and discovered that

> "Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God."

On his way homeward he found God, not only in the green pastures, but even in the burning sand. He saw the reflection of His love in the eyes

of Zipporah, the innocent faces of his children, and the warm hearts of his friends. When he returned to Egypt, he felt His presence in the rolling waters of the Nile, the fields where he played with Aaron in days gone by, and the rushes among which he was sheltered in the basket. He met with Him in the palace, as well as in the hovels of the Hebrews. As he led the people through the desert, He found Him among the stormy billows of the Red Sea, and beside the wells of Elim. He heard His voice in the thunders of Sinai, the howling of the storm, and the gentle patter of the raindrops. When at last he stood on Mount Pisgah, and cast his eyes over the hills and valleys of Palestine, he saw that it was indeed a Holy Land, for every prospect shone with the beauty of the Lord. Then he lay down gladly to rest in His bosom.

But it is not only great prophets and poets who see God's glory in Nature. To every reverent spirit He reveals Himself. You may remember the words spoken by Old Abram, in Gene Stratton Porter's *Song of the Cardinal,* to the young hunter who tried to shoot the bird: "To my mind, ain't no better way to love an' worship God than to protect an' appreciate these fine gifts He's given for our joy an' use. Worshippin' that bird's a kind o' religion with me. Gettin' the beauty from the sky, an' the trees, an' the grass, an' the water that God made, is nothin' but doin' Him homage. Whole earth's a sanctuary. You can worship from sky above to grass under foot."

Even a child may have the vision. Jean François Millet was a little French boy who lived in a

village called Gruchy, on the coast of Normandy. His parents were poor peasants, but they had both a deep love for Nature. His father used to take him out for a walk through the fields or by the shore. Every little while he would pick a flower or a blade of grass, or point to some tree they were passing, and show him how beautiful it was. One day they were watching the sunset from the cliffs above Gruchy. Jean cried out with delight at the golden glory on the sea. But his father took off his hat, and reverently said, "My son, it is God." It was as if a veil dropped from the boy's eyes. He too saw God in His works. And he never lost the vision. When he grew up, he became a famous artist. The pictures he painted were all of simple things, such as peasants at work in the fields, shepherds with their sheep, and cottage women nursing their children. But into all of them he threw the light he had seen that day on the waters. And as we look at them, an awe steals over us. For we have the sense that God is there.

If our hearts are open to the love of God, we too shall find Him in all things. We shall see His glory in the sunshine and the stars, in sea and stream, in the mountain and the forest, in the green grass, the yellow broom, and the purple heather, in the pure white snowdrop, the red rose, the lily, the daisy, and the buttercup. We shall hear His voice in the song of the lark, the cooing of the dove, the whistle of the wind, and the merry babbling of the brook. We shall trace His likeness in every gracious life, and we shall feel His influence in every kind word and deed.

"When I found Him in my bosom,
Then I found Him everywhere,
In the bud and in the blossom,
In the earth and in the air;
And He spake to me with clearness
From the silent stars that say,
'As ye find Him in His nearness,
Ye shall find Him far away.' "

W. C. Smith.

VIII

A ROD IN THE HAND

WHEN we see the vision of God, we are moved to serve him in some way. The line of service for Moses was clear. It was to go back to Egypt, and help to set his people free. The time was ripe for this. Rameses had died after a long reign of sixty-seven years. He was buried in the royal city of Thebes, where his mummy was discovered about fifty years ago. As we look upon his hard, stern features, we can imagine the sigh of relief that rose from the Hebrews when they heard of his death. The new Pharaoh, Merneptah, was a feeble old man when he began to reign. Though he fought bravely against his enemies, he was unable to stop the decay which now fell upon Egypt. But he was as harsh to the Hebrews as his father had been. We read that their groaning rose up to heaven, and that God took notice of them, and resolved to save them from the hand of the Egyptians, and to make for them a new home in Palestine, which was a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey. And He called on Moses to be their leader. "Behold, now, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, then, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring

forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

At first Moses shrank from the task. He felt he was too humble a person to go to Pharaoh and plead for his people. Even when the Lord assured him that He would be with him, to give him favour in the eyes of the Egyptians, he urged that perhaps the Hebrews themselves would neither believe him nor hearken to his voice. Then the Lord said to him, "What is that in thine hand?" And he said, "A rod." And the Lord said, "Cast it on the ground." And he cast it on the ground. And when it touched the ground, it became a serpent, and Moses fled in terror from it. Then the Lord said, "Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail." And Moses did so, and it became a rod in his hand again.

The rod which Moses cast on the ground was the shepherd's crook which he carried with him to guide his flock and to lift the lost ones out of holes and pitfalls. When charged with the spirit of God, it became a living thing, able to strike terror even into the heart of Pharaoh. It is wonderful what a rod may still do in the hand of a true leader of men. You have seen the conductor of an orchestra. Simply by moving his baton he directs the whole concert. One might almost fancy that he draws out the music with the point of the baton. We read of General Gordon, too, that he led his army to battle by waving a short white cane. The Chinese used to call it "the magic wand of victory."

But there are many other little things which may become as powerful as Moses' rod. A pen

in the hand of a ready writer will dash off words that burn like a fire, or sting like a serpent. A chisel in the hand of Michel Angelo will shape a useless block of marble into the immortal figure of a David. A brush in the hand of Raphael will turn the empty canvas into a Sistine Madonna. A needle in the hand of a clever seamstress will do work beautiful in the eyes of God, whether it be simple mending for the home, warm garments for the poor, or embroideries for the queen's palace.

Some of our greatest discoveries have been made by attention to very little things. Galileo found out the secret of the earth's movement from watching the swing of a lamp in the cathedral of Pisa. Newton hit upon the law of gravitation through seeing an apple fall to the ground. James Watt learned to run engines by steam because when a boy he had observed the power of steam in a kettle. Benjamin Franklin began the science of electricity by sending up a key hung on a kite into the thunder-cloud. Sir Samuel Brown got his idea of the Suspension Bridge from a spider's thread. And Brunel formed his plan for the Thames Tunnel on the way in which the shipworm bores its hole.

In the same manner, all good work has had small beginnings. Dr. Barnardo's Homes for Destitute Children started with a gift of sixpence and three farthings from a servant girl. D. L. Moody was led to embark on his great evangelistic career through kind Mr. Kimball laying his hand on his shoulder, and asking him if he would not give his heart to Christ. Long afterwards he used to say,

"I can feel the touch of that man's hand upon my shoulder even yet." The modern missionary movement sprang from the heart of a village cobbler, William Carey, whose fine motto was, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." Christianity itself began with a few simple fishermen, who gathered round the Master to hear His words of life.

There are many people too timid to do any real work for God or man. Perhaps they feel they have but one poor talent; and like the man in the parable they wrap it up in a napkin, and bury it in the earth. Or they are waiting for some big opportunity to come to them. But the only way to increase our talents is to make full use of what we have. And we must begin just where we are, with that which is in our hand. As Carlyle was always urging, "Do the duty that lies nearest thee." Then the little things will lead to great, and fit us for high service both in this life and in the next.

"Small things are best:
Grief and unrest
To rank and wealth are given;
But little things
On little wings
Bear little souls to heaven."

F. W. Faber.

IX

BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW

MOSES still held back, urging that he was a man of slow speech. But the Lord answered him, saying, "Who hath made man's mouth? Is it not I, the Lord? Go then, and I will be with thy mouth, and will teach thee what thou shalt speak." And when Moses begged Him to send someone else, His anger was kindled against him, and He said, "Is there not Aaron thy brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. And behold! he is even now coming to meet thee; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak to him, and put the words in his mouth, while I show you both what ye shall do. Thus he shall be thy spokesman to the people: he shall be a mouthpiece to thee, and thou shalt be a Godsend to him."

At last Moses yielded to the call. Then he rose up, and returned to Jethro, and asked permission to go and visit his brethren in Egypt. With true Arab courtesy Jethro bade him go in peace. So he saddled his ass, placed his wife and his two sons on it, and set out for Egypt, taking the rod of God in his hand. Meantime the Lord had bidden Aaron go out to the desert to meet Moses. So he went, and met him at Horeb, where Moses

had seen the vision of God in the burning bush. We can imagine the delight with which the two brothers met after all these years of separation. The story tells us how Aaron fell on Moses' neck, and kissed him, as Esau had kissed his brother Jacob. No doubt he greeted Zipporah and the boys with equal affection. Then he would have to give Moses all the news about his own wife and children, about their sister Miriam, and about their old parents, Amram and Jochebed, who were most likely dead by this time. Moses was now able to tell Aaron the business on which the Lord had sent him. Aaron gladly accepted his part in it, and the little company went on their way again.

When they reached Egypt, Moses and Aaron gathered together the elders of Israel, and told them what the Lord had said. They also showed them the signs He had given them. And the men believed; and they bowed down their heads, and worshipped.

Moses and Aaron then went to Pharaoh, and asked him to let the children of Israel go a three days' journey into the desert, to offer sacrifice to Jehovah their God. But Pharaoh refused, saying, "Who is Jehovah, that I should listen to His voice, in letting Israel go? I know nothing about Jehovah; and I will not let Israel go." Moreover, he accused Moses and Aaron of trying to unsettle the people at their work. So he bade them begone to their own business. And that same day he sent an order to the overseers of the Israelites that they should add to their burdens. It was the custom for makers of bricks to work little pieces of

chopped straw into the clay, to hold it more firmly together. This straw used to be supplied to the Israelites. But now Pharaoh ordered the overseers to give them no more. "Let them go," he said, "and gather straw for themselves." And they must still produce as large a number of bricks as before! So the people were scattered all over the land of Egypt, in search of stubble from which to chop the straw. And the overseers urged them on, saying, "Fill in your full day's work, as when ye had the straw given you." When they failed to do so, the Hebrew foremen were beaten with rods. They went to Pharaoh, and complained that they had been beaten without cause. But he drove them off, saying, "Ye are idle, ye are idle." So the people had to make their bricks without straw, as we may see from the upper walls of the ruined city of Pithom, where many of the bricks are of pure clay.

It was very foolish of Pharaoh to compel the Israelites to make bricks without straw. He might have foreseen that the walls they built would soon crumble into dust. But he was just as foolish in everything else. He was trying, in fact, to build up his Empire on bricks without straw. That is, he ruled Egypt by force, without the binding influence of justice and humanity. Now no kingdom can last long which is not based on justice and humanity. So Pharaoh's power fell to pieces, sooner even than the walls of Pithom.

There are many people at the present day quite as foolish as Pharaoh. They are ambitious to excel. Like the builders of Babel, they strive to raise up towers whose top shall reach to heaven.

But they do not put the solid grain of character into their work. They pay no regard to the principles of truth and honour. For a while they may seem to get on. But sooner or later the whole building will tumble in ruins about their heads. To quote again from Old Abram: "Young man, truth is the corner-stone o' the temple o' character. Nobody can put up a good buildin' without a solid foundation; an' you can't do solid character buildin' with a lie at the base. Man that's a liar ain't fit for anything! Can't trust him in no sphere or relation o' life; or in any way, shape, or manner."

If we wish our buildings to last, we must first of all lay our foundation on the Rock of Ages, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we must have our bricks shot through with the straw of sterling character. We must be true both in word and in deed. We must act justly to all men. We must be thoughtful and kindly, merciful and loving. If so, the rain may descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon our work, but it will not fall, for it is eternal as the heavens.

"Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives."

GEORGE HERBERT.

X

THE TEN PLAGUES

THE Hebrew foremen were vexed at their treatment by Pharaoh. They saw that they and their people were in a very desperate plight. And they blamed Moses and Aaron for having caused all the trouble. Meeting them as they left the palace, they plied them with reproaches, saying, "May the Lord look down upon you, and pass judgment on your actions! For ye have brought us into ill odour with Pharaoh and his servants, putting a sword into their hand to slay us."

Moses was just as vexed as they were. But he made no attempt to throw the blame on others. Instead of this, he took the matter straight to the Lord, and said, "O Lord, why hast Thou ill treated this people? And why didst Thou send me here? For ever since I came to Pharaoh, to speak in Thy name, he has ill treated this people. And Thou hast not delivered this people at all."

Now the Lord had already told Moses that Pharaoh would not let the people go, till he was forced by a strong hand—His own strong hand. And in answer to his prayer He assured him that this was about to happen. "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh. For under the compulsion of a strong hand shall he let them go: yea, under the

compulsion of a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."

A few mornings after, Pharaoh had gone down to the Nile, perhaps to offer sacrifice. Moses was sent to meet him by the river's brink, and to warn him that, unless he let the people go, the river would be turned into blood. Pharaoh paid no heed to the warning. So Moses bade Aaron lift his rod over the river, and soon the water became red like blood. And all the fish in the river died. And the water was so impure that the people could not drink it, but were driven to dig wells in the soft ground bordering the river.

Seven days passed, and the water became pure and sweet again. But Pharaoh's heart was as hard as ever. So Moses was bidden go and say to him, "'Thus saith the Lord, 'Let my people go, that they may worship me! And if thou refuse to let them go, behold! I will smite all the corners of thy land with frogs.' " The appeal fell on deaf ears. So Aaron lifted his rod again over the waters of Egypt; and great swarms of frogs came up, and covered the land, crawling into the houses, and squatting on plates and bowls, tables, chairs and couches, even the king's bed.

Pharaoh was so distressed by the frogs that he sent for Moses and Aaron, bade them intreat the Lord to remove the plague, and promised that he would then allow the people to go and worship Him. But as soon as the frogs were removed, he hardened his heart, and refused to let them go. Then the Lord bade Aaron stretch out his rod, and smite the dust of the earth. And when he did so,

clouds of gnats, or mosquitoes, rose over all the land, and tortured both man and beast.

Still Pharaoh hardened his heart, and the Lord sent gad-flies, which stung the Egyptians so cruelly that Pharaoh offered to let the people go, on condition that they went not very far away. So Moses intreated the Lord, and the flies were removed from Pharaoh and his people—there remained not one. But Pharaoh hardened his heart once more, and would not let Israel go.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go unto Pharaoh, and tell him, 'Thus saith Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may worship me! For if thou refuse to let them go, behold! the hand of the Lord shall be upon thy cattle in the field—the horses, the asses, the camels, the flocks and the herds—with a very grievous pestilence.'" And as Pharaoh refused to listen, He sent the pestilence next morning, and all the cattle that belonged to the Egyptians died, while the cattle of the Israelites were left alive. Yet the heart of Pharaoh remained as stubborn as before.

The Lord now bade Moses take two handfuls of soot from a kiln, and toss it up towards heaven, in the presence of Pharaoh. And the soot blew all over the land, and settled on the flesh of man and beast, causing boils which broke into painful ulcers upon their bodies. Still Pharaoh hardened his heart, and would not let the people go.

Then the Lord sent upon Pharaoh and his people a storm of hail "such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation." It was the season when the barley was in the ear,

and the flax in bloom. And the hail-stones dashed the barley and flax to the ground, and broke the trees in pieces, leaving the whole land stripped and wasted. Pharaoh's proud spirit was at last broken by the ruin. So he sent for Moses and Aaron, saying, "Now I know that I have sinned: Jehovah is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong." And he begged them to intreat the Lord that the storm might cease, promising that this time he would let the people go.

So Moses went out from Pharaoh's presence, and lifted up his hands in prayer to the Lord. And the storm ceased, and calm returned to the earth. But when Pharaoh saw that the storm had ceased, he hardened his heart again, and would not let the people go. Then the Lord threatened to bring upon him a plague of locusts which should devour every green thing that was left by the hail. And when Pharaoh's servants heard it, they implored him to let Israel go, before the land should be wholly destroyed. So he called Moses and Aaron to him, and said, "Go now, ye that are men, and worship the Lord." But they asked that their sons and daughters should be permitted to go with them. Pharaoh was unwilling to allow them, and answered angrily, "The Lord be with you, indeed, if I let you go with your little ones! Truly, there is evil in your thoughts." And he drove them out from his presence.

Then the Lord made a stiff east wind to blow upon Egypt all that day and night. And in the morning the wind brought locusts, which swarmed over the face of the land, and ate up every green thing that was left by the hail. Then Pharaoh

sent in great haste for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and also against you. So now, I pray you, forgive my sin only this once, and intreat the Lord your God, that He may take away this deadly plague from me."

Once more Moses went out from Pharaoh's presence, and intreated the Lord on his behalf. And the Lord sent a violent west wind, which caught up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea, so that there remained not one in all the coasts of Egypt. But Pharaoh hardened his heart again, and the Lord bade Moses stretch out his hand toward heaven, that there might be darkness over the land, "even darkness which could be felt." And when Moses stretched out his hand, there came a three days' darkness over the land, so dense that men could not see one another, and had to remain all the time at home. Then Pharaoh sent for Moses, and said, "Go ye, worship the Lord, both ye and your little ones: only your flocks and herds must be left behind." But Moses said, "Nay! Our cattle also shall go with us. There shall not a hoof be left behind; for these we must take to worship the Lord." And Pharaoh hardened his heart, and drove Moses from his presence, saying, "Get thee hence! And take care that thou see my face no more! For in the day that thou seest my face again, thou shalt surely die." And Moses said, "Thou hast spoken the truth: I will see thy face no more."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "One more plague will I bring upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians; and afterwards he shall let you go hence: yea, he

shall thrust you out hence by force." And He told him that about midnight of that same day He would pass through the land of Egypt, and would slay all the firstborn in the land, both of men and of cattle. So at midnight the Lord passed through the land, and slew the firstborn, "from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner that lay in the dungeon," along with the firstborn of cattle. And a great cry broke over Egypt; "for there was not a house where there was not one dead." And Pharaoh rose up while it was still night, and sent for Moses and Aaron, saying, "Rise up, get ye out from the midst of my people, both ye and the children of Israel! Go, worship the Lord, as ye have said; take both your flocks and your herds, and be gone—and bless me too!" The Egyptians also urged them to go, and heaped upon them gifts of gold and silver and raiment, to get them out of the land more speedily. For they said one to another, "If they stay, we shall all be dead men."

XI

THE PASSOVER

WE have all of us red-letter days. The happiest are our birthdays, when we receive so many beautiful gifts from those who love us. Then there is Christmas, the birthday of Jesus, with its spirit of kindness and good will to everyone. Nations also have days which they celebrate with great rejoicing, such as Empire Day, Dominion Day, and Independence Day, which is the birthday of the country's freedom. The birthday of Israel was the day on which the Lord delivered them from the land of Egypt. And they celebrated this day by the feast of Passover.

While the Lord was still speaking with Moses, He bade him tell the people to take a lamb for each family, and slay it at sunset, and sprinkle the blood with a bunch of hyssop on the lintel and the two side posts of their houses. Then the flesh was to be roasted with fire, and eaten with bitter herbs and cakes of unleavened bread. It was to be eaten in great haste, everyone having his loins girded, his shoes on his feet, and his staff in his hand, ready for the march. And none of it was to remain till the morning: all that was left must be burned with fire. As soon as they had eaten

the flesh, they were to set out on their journey. And year by year, as the day of their deliverance came round, they were to keep it as a festival for all time.

So Moses called the elders of Israel, and bade them take lambs, and slay them, and sprinkle the blood on the doorways, and eat the flesh with bitter herbs and cakes of unleavened bread, as the Lord had spoken. He instructed them also, when they reached Palestine, to observe the feast after the same manner, they and their sons for ever. And when their children asked them, "What mean ye by this service?" they were to answer, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, because He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians."

The elders bowed their heads, and worshipped. Then they went and did as the Lord commanded. And every Easter since then, the people of Israel have gathered together in their homes, and observed the feast of Passover, and told their children how the Lord delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and led them through the desert, and brought them to the Promised Land, and showed great mercies to them.

The day of Passover means far more for us than it meant for the Israelites. For on that day Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain. In the service of Communion we celebrate His dying love. And when our children ask us what is the meaning of that service, we tell them it is the memorial of what He did to save us from our sins and bring us home to heaven.

"By Christ redeemed, in Christ restored,
We keep the memory adored,
And show the death of our dear Lord,
Until He come."

GEORGE RAWSON.

XII

A GOOD MAN'S BONES

THE children of Israel were now ready to leave Egypt. But first they had a solemn duty to discharge. Long years before, when Joseph was dying, he had taken an oath of his people, saying, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." So they took his embalmed body from the tomb where it had lain, placed it in a coffin, and carried it with them in all their wanderings till they came to Palestine. And there they buried it in Shechem, "in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of money."

We can think of but one other funeral procession which matches this in mournful dignity. On the first day of May, 1873, David Livingstone was found kneeling at his bed-side, dead, in a hut at the little village of Ilala, in the depths of Central Africa. His native attendants would fain have kept his body there; but they felt that England had the first claim to it. So they removed his heart, and buried it under a tree in Ilala, and carved a simple inscription on the tree. Then they wrapped the body in calico, lashed it to a pole to be carried on their shoulders, and began their

march to the sea. For nine months the brave Africans bore their precious burden over mountains and deserts, rivers and swamps, cheerfully enduring hardships and dangers of all kinds, till they were able to hand it over to the British Consul at Zanzibar. Even then the most loyal of them would not leave the body of the leader they had loved so well, but accompanied it to England, and stood by on that Saturday in April, 1874—almost a year after they had set out on their journey—when it was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, among the ashes of the noblest men whom the country has known.

It was a true instinct that guided these simple hearts. For we all love to have near us the last remains of the great and good who have done much for us. And as we stand at their graves, we are inspired to follow in their footsteps. We seem, indeed, to hear their voices still speaking to us, and bidding us take up the work they have left unfinished, and carry it through to the end.

"Out of the grave our fathers reach
Dead hands to hold us here,
And never we open the earth with tears
But the land becomes more dear—
Sweet with memory, brave with love,
And proud with the hope ahead
That our sons shall be stronger, our homes more fair,
When we go down to the dead."

HAROLD BEGBIE.

XIII

THE PILLAR OF CLOUD AND FIRE

THE journey that lay before the Israelites was a long and difficult one. Much of it was through desert country, where they had not even a footprint to guide them. So they might easily be led off the track, and fall into the hands of enemies, or be swallowed up in the blinding sand.

Travellers in the desert might find another caravan in front of them. In that case they would see on the far horizon the cloud of dust raised by the tramp of many feet, the cloud which an Arab poet describes as "like the smoke that rises from a pile of dry wood newly kindled, when fresh plants are mingled in the heap, and the north wind plays with the blazing flame." At night, too, when the camp-fires were lighted, they would see the pillar of fire that shot through the sky, flushing the darkness with its cheering beams. And while they followed the cloud and the fire, they would know that they were on the right path, and that help was near if they needed it.

When the children of Israel were passing through the desert, there was no caravan ahead to show them the way. So the Lord Himself went before them, in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead

them on their journey, and a pillar of fire by night, to give them light and comfort.

We can picture the scene. Day broke, and the host moved out of camp. The sun shone brightly above them. But all around was desolation. Sand, sand, nothing but sand! The bewildered people hardly knew where to turn. Then slowly the pillar of cloud rose in the distance, and they followed it with trustful steps. When the day's march was over, the sun set, and the tents were pitched for the night. But eerie thoughts would haunt them. At times the wind would howl, and the sand would whistle through the camp. Often, too, they would fancy they saw weird shapes, or heard strange whisperings, in the darkness. Then the pillar of fire flashed out, and they knew that the Lord was near. So they lay down to sleep in peace.

God used to guide His people by cloud, and fire, and light. But now He has sent His Son Jesus to lead us. He knows all the way of life. When He was here on earth, He lived as a boy with other boys, and a man with other men. He threw Himself into all that interests us, in our homes, our work, our friendships and our games. He loved the good things of life. He faced also its trials and temptations. But while we fail again and again, He came out victorious. As He hung on the Cross He could say to His Father, "It is finished." Thus He is able to lead us rightly, to cheer us in our troubles, and to help us in the time of temptation. And at the close of our journey He will light our way through the Valley of the Shadow of Death to the sunshine of the Father's home.

"Jesus, still lead on,
Till our rest be won;
And, although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless:
Guide us by Thy hand
To our Fatherland."

ZINZENDORF.

XIV

CROSSING THE SEA

THE nearest way to Palestine was along the coast. But the Philistines had planted themselves there, and would certainly bar the way. The Lord was afraid lest the people might be discouraged if they had so soon to fight for their freedom. So He led them toward the northern tip of the Red Sea, a long stretch of shallow, reed-grown water known as the Sea of Sedge. And after a few days' march they pitched their camp at Pihahiroth, over against the sea.

In the meantime Pharaoh had changed his mind, and said to his officers, "What is this we have done—to let Israel go from serving us?" So he got ready a great army, including six hundred of his best chariots, with picked captains over each, and pursued after the people, determined to bring them back again. The Egyptian host overtook the Israelites as they lay encamped at Pihahiroth. When Pharaoh saw them, he thought to himself, "They are trapped: they cannot escape." The Israelites, too, were sorely afraid, and said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that thou didst take us away to die in the desert? Why didst thou ever bring us out of Egypt? Was not this the word that we spake to

thee in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians; for it were better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert?' "

Moses was grieved at their cowardice. But he himself was strong in faith, and he said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you to-day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Then Moses lifted up his heart in prayer to the Lord. And even as he prayed, the command rang out, "Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward!" So Moses gave the order, and they went forward. As they marched on, the pillar of cloud and fire removed itself from the van, and stood between them and the Egyptians, giving light to them, but throwing darkness upon the Egyptians. Then at God's bidding Moses stretched his hand over the sea. And a strong north-east wind began to blow, which beat back the waters all that night, so that the Israelites crossed the sea as on dry land.

In the morning, when the Egyptians found that the Israelites were gone, they yoked their chariots, and plunged into the sea after them. But the eye of the Lord flashed upon them from the midst of the pillar. That is, He sent thunder and lightning, which filled them with terror. He also poured down torrents of rain, which clogged the wheels of their chariots, and made them drive heavily. Then He bade Moses stretch his hand once more over the sea. And the wind changed, and the waters returned to their former channel. As soon as

the Egyptians saw the tide rising upon them, they wheeled about, and fled towards the shore. But the waters caught them as they fled, and overwhelmed them in the midst of the sea. Of all Pharaoh's horsemen, there remained not one.

Great joy broke over the ranks of the Israelites when they saw their enemies destroyed. We read that Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, took a timbrel, or tambourine, and led the women in a dance of victory. And as they danced, they sang one to another:

"Sing to the Lord,
Who hath triumphed so gloriously;
The horse and his rider
He hath hurled in the sea."

When Moses heard them singing, he took up the strain, and out of their simple refrain he composed a noble hymn of praise:

"I will sing to the Lord,
Who hath triumphed so gloriously;
The horse and his rider
He hath hurled in the sea.

"The Lord is my strength and my song,
And He is become my salvation;
This is my God, and I'll praise Him—
My father's God, and I'll laud Him:
Jehovah, the Lord of battles,
Jehovah is His name.

"The chariots of Pharaoh He hath flung in the sea;
The flower of his warriors are sunk in the Sedge.
The waters cover them:
They went down in the depths like a stone.

"Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power:
Thy right hand, O Lord, doth shatter the enemy.
By the might of Thy majesty Thou tearest down tyrants;
Thou dost send forth Thy wrath—it consumes them as stubble.

"By the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were massed;
The floods stood up like a wall:
The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.

"The enemy said: 'I'll pursue, I'll catch up,
I'll share the spoil, I'll sate my desire on them;
My sword I'll make bare, my hand shall destroy them.'

"Thou didst blow with Thy wind;
The sea covered them:
They sank like a plummet in waters o'erwhelming.

"Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord,
Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness?
Awful in praises, wondrous in deed:
Thou didst reach out Thy hand—the earth swallowed them."

XV

WELLS AND PALMS

WHEN Moses had sung his song to the Lord, he led his people into the desert of Shur, on the east side of the Sea of Sedge. For three days they marched through the desert, and found no water. At last they came to a well. But when they tasted the water, they found it so bitter that they could not drink it. So they called the name of the place Marah, which means "Bitter." And they began to murmur against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" And once more he took his trouble to the Lord.

Now there is a certain bush in the desert which has the power of making bitter water sweet. The Lord pointed out one of these bushes to Moses. And he cast it into the well, and the water became sweet. And the people drank of it, and went on their way refreshed.

Soon their eyes were gladdened by the sight of a number of palm trees waving above the horizon. With quickened steps they pressed forward, and found a grassy place dotted with twelve wells and seventy palms. And they called the name of the place Elim, that is, "Green trees." And they camped there for several days, slaking their thirst at the wells, and resting on the fresh green grass and under the grateful shade of the trees.

I think John Bunyan must often have had this scene in mind when he was writing *The Pilgrim's Progress*. For the book is full of wells, and running streams, and grass, and trees. At the foot of the hill Difficulty, you remember, there is a spring, at which Christian refreshes himself before he begins to climb. Then about half-way to the top he finds "a pleasant arbour, made by the Lord of the hill," where he lies down for a little to rest. The Interpreter's House has its garden, with "a great variety of flowers." The banks of the river of the water of life are carpeted with tracts of green sward, which Christian and his companion find "very pleasant and enlivening to their weary spirits." And the Delectable Mountains are "a most pleasant mountainous country, beautified with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts, flowers also, with springs and fountains," where the Pilgrims eat and drink, wash and refresh themselves, before they pass on to Beulah Land, that sunny place of flowers and birds and angels, which lies in full view of the Celestial City.

Now all this is a true picture of life. We may sometimes have to march through the desert, or to fight to the death with evil. Yet our lives are rich in sweet green spots like Elim. For most of us, childhood is a happy land of bubbling springs, gardens, and orchards. Even when we grow older, there are many Elims to refresh us on our journey. Home is the dearest of all our Elims. There we shake off the dust from our feet, and drink deep draughts of the best happiness in life. Friendship is an Elim. He who is blessed with true friendships has a never-failing spring of happiness in his

heart. The Sabbath is an Elim in the midst of the week's toil and bustle. And our holidays may be Elims, if we spend them in the open air, revelling in the beauty of heaven and earth and sea, bringing our minds into sympathy with God's wonderful works, and praising Him for His great goodness.

We can even make our whole life an Elim. The name of Hans Andersen is dear to boys and girls because of his delightful *Fairy Tales*. But he deserves to be loved for his own sake as well. He was the son of a poor shoemaker. He had a hard struggle with misfortunes of every kind. Even when he was writing his books, he was laughed at as a dreamer of idle dreams. Yet he seemed always to be overflowing with happiness. He loved God as his Father, and Jesus as his elder Brother. He loved God's family on earth, especially the little children, the birds and the beasts. So he found happiness in all things. He used to say, "Life is the most lovely of fairy tales, and I often ask myself, with heartfelt emotion, Why does God grant me so much happiness?" On his death-bed he was heard to murmur, "Oh, how happy I am! How beautiful the world is! Life is so beautiful! It is just as if I were sailing into a land far, far away, where there is no pain, no sorrow."

Another of our favourite authors is Robert Louis Stevenson. He had to fight with sickness all his life. As a child he spent many painful weeks in bed. Most of his later years he was an exile from country and friends. But he never ceased to be cheerful. While he was lying ill in bed, he sang of "the pleasant land of counterpane." And in

the midst of his sufferings he had a kind smile and word for everyone. His happiness also sprang from love. Like Hans Andersen, he loved God's beautiful world. He had a real passion for the heather hills of Scotland, as well as for the sunny isles of the Pacific. He loved the wild moors, the glens, and the meadows. He loved

> "Every path and every plot,
> Every bush of roses,
> Every blue forget-me-not,
> Where the dew reposes."

He loved men and women, boys and girls. He was devoted to his parents, his aunt, and his dear nurse, Alison Cunningham, "the Angel of my infant life," to whom he dedicates the charming book, *A Child's Garden of Verses.* When he had a home of his own, he was the best of fathers to his two stepchildren, Lloyd and Isobel Osbourne. But his heart went out in love to all God's children. He was the friend of the poor passengers on board the emigrant ship, the rough miners in California, and the simple natives of Samoa, who returned his kindness by building for him "the Road of the Loving Heart." And the source of his love to others was his love for the Unseen Playmate who had been with him from his childhood. For there is more than simple fancy in the verse:

> "He lies in the laurels, He runs on the grass,
> He sings when you tinkle the musical glass;
> Whene'er you are happy and cannot tell why,
> The Friend of the Children is sure to be by!"

It is from this Friend of the Children that all of us learn the secret of happiness. He was poor and needy. Often He had no roof to shelter Him from the storm. He was scorned, insulted, and persecuted. He was condemned by unjust judges, and nailed to the Cross. But His heart was always welling over with happiness. Even at the Last Supper, when He looked death in the face, He could say to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." He was so happy because He was so loving. And if we love as He did, He will open wells of happiness in our hearts that shall spring up unto life eternal.

"Be Thou the well by which I lie and rest;
Be Thou my tree of life, my garden ground;
Be Thou my home, my fire, my chamber blest,
My book of wisdom, loved of all the best;
Oh, be my Friend, each day still newer found,
As the eternal days and nights go round!
Nay, nay,—Thou art my God, in whom all loves are bound."

GEORGE MACDONALD.

XVI

QUAILS AND MANNA

WHEN they had rested long enough at Elim, the children of Israel went on to the desert of Sin, which lies between Elim and Sinai. Day after day they journeyed, but found nothing to eat. The bread they had in their wallets was fast becoming spent, and it seemed as if they must soon die of hunger. So they began once more to murmur against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Why did ye bring us into this wilderness, to slay us all with hunger? Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and ate bread to the full!"

Moses and Aaron were cut to the quick by their murmurings, and said to them, "What are we, that ye murmur against us? We are but the hands of the Lord. So your murmurings are not against us, but against Him." And they prayed to the Lord in their trouble. And straightway He answered, "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: so then speak unto them, saying, 'At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God.'" And Moses and Aaron spoke to them, saying, "The Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the

morning bread to the full; then ye shall see the glory of the Lord, and ye shall know that it was He that brought you out of the land of Egypt."

Now it came to pass in the evening that a strong wind blew from the south. And there came up with the wind a great flight of quails. These are small birds of the same family as the partridge, which migrate every spring from Arabia and other southern countries to the coasts of Asia Minor and Malta, returning to their old homes towards the end of September. They always fly with the wind, and alight on the ground at sunset, being usually so exhausted that they can easily be caught by hand. They are much relished as food by the people of Egypt and Southern Europe, who not merely eat them fresh, but also cure them by spreading them out to dry in the sun.

That evening the quails came in such numbers that they covered all the ground about the camp of the Israelites. And the hungry people caught and ate with great joy. No doubt, also, they would cure many of them to eat in the days to come, as we learn they did later on, when a second flight of quails passed over the camp.

As the Lord had promised, the morning brought them new cause for joy. For after the dew had risen, they saw the face of the desert covered with thin flakes of a substance white and small as the hoar frost. They tasted it, and found it sweet like honeyed pastry. This was manna, the juice of a shrub called Tarfa, which still grows abundantly in the desert of Sin. The juice trickles by night from the stem and branches of the tree, and in the early morning hardens into small round

grains which drop to the ground. And there it lies till it is picked up, or else melts in the sunshine.

When Moses saw the manna, he said to the people, "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat: go and gather of it every man according to his needs." So they went and gathered each an omer, that is, about six and a half pints. And this they did as long as the manna fell. "They gathered it morning by morning, every man according to his needs; and when the sun waxed hot, that which remained on the ground melted away."

The Lord who fed the Israelites in the wilderness still gives His people bread. Often He works for them miracles as great as those of the Exodus. Lives of men like Mungo Park and Livingstone are brimful of wonders. When they were faint with hunger, God spread for them "a table in the wilderness," as Park devoutly calls it. Sometimes He led them to ripe fruit trees. Or He brought some stray animal within range of their rifles. At other times He moved the heart of a poor native woman to share her scanty meal with them. On Livingstone's return to Ujiji, lonely, wearied, sick almost to death, and robbed of food, clothing and medicine, He sent him "the good Samaritan," as he says, in the person of Henry M. Stanley, who had come all the way from America to bring him what he needed. And the brave man poured out his soul in praise to God, and went on his way with fresh heart and hope.

But it is not only in these wonderful ways that the Lord feeds His people. Sir Walter Scott once

wrote to a young friend: "The older you grow, the more you will be thankful that the finest of God's mercies are common mercies." Yes! the finest of God's mercies are common mercies. But we are not always so thankful for these mercies as we ought to be. Often we eat our daily bread without a word of thanksgiving to God. Yet it is He who gives us all we have. He supplies the air we breathe. He keeps the sea filled with fish for our use. He clothes the earth with grass for the creatures that provide our milk, and meat, and clothing. He sends the sunshine and showers that ripen the crops and bring us rich harvests of grain.

"Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
And back of the flour is the mill,
And back of the mill is the wheat, and the shower,
And the sun, and the Father's will."

M. D. Babcock.

XVII

THE UPLIFTED HANDS

THE Israelites were now to have their first taste of war. They had pitched their tents in the valley of Rephidim, on the eastern edge of the desert of Sin, and were quietly resting or watering their flocks when suddenly they were attacked by an armed band of Amalekites. Moses was too old for battle. So he handed over the command to his young friend Joshua, the son of Nun, while he himself went with Aaron and Hur, who is said to have been the husband of Miriam, to the hill-top above the valley, to pray for God's help in the fight.

The battle was hot and fierce. So long as Moses held up his hands in prayer, the victory lay on Israel's side. But when he grew weary and dropped his hands, the tide turned, and Amalek began to win. Then Aaron and Hur took a stone, and placed it for Moses to rest on; and they stood one on each side of him, steadily propping up his hands until the going down of the sun. Thus Moses prayed all afternoon without ceasing. And the Lord answered his prayer. For under the shadow of the uplifted hands Joshua fought and conquered the Amalekites, smiting them with the edge of the sword, and leaving not a man in arms to oppose him.

The scene reminds us of a striking incident in Scottish history. The lines were formed for the battle of Bannockburn, and King Edward of England had given the order to advance. It seemed impossible for the small Scottish army to stand its ground. But as the trumpets rang out, every man knelt for a moment in silent prayer to God. When Edward saw them kneel, he cried out joyfully, "Yon folk kneel to ask mercy." "Yes!" replied a brave knight who stood near him, Sir Ingram d' Umfraville, "they ask mercy, but not of you. It is to God they cry. And I tell you one thing truly: These men will all win or die." It was as Sir Ingram had said. The praying Scottish warriors might die—and many of them did die—but they would never yield to the invader. And by God's help they won that day a crowning victory for freedom.

Good soldiers like Cromwell and Washington, Gordon and Roberts, teach us ever afresh that "prayer is the very sword of the saints." When Cromwell became an officer in the Parliamentary Army, he found the ranks filled with drunken, swearing fellows, who were driven like chaff before the fierce charges of the gentlemen of England; but after he had gathered about him the Ironsides, who were men of prayer like himself, he could truthfully say, "From that day forward they were never beaten, and wherever they were engaged against the enemy, they beat continually." It was noticed of Washington, too, that in his hottest campaigns he was most careful to lay aside some time for daily prayer, and urged his men to follow his example. Nor did he ever fail

to acknowledge God's help in giving him the victory. General Gordon used to retire to his tent every morning for one half-hour of prayer, leaving his handkerchief at the door as a signal that he was engaged with God, and must not be disturbed by anyone. Thus amid all kinds of difficulties he was able to lick his raw recruits into what was afterwards known as the Ever Victorious Army. Lord Roberts was another man of faith and prayer, who confessed quite openly that without God he could have had no success.

The last great war has taught us the lesson anew. From General to private, men fought with the sword of prayer as well as the sword of steel. Before every great crisis Marshal Foch spent much time on his knees; and he rose up strengthened by the power of God for the battle. Sir Douglas Haig never missed the hour of worship and prayer. General Pershing was as devout a man as either. And their spirit passed through all the ranks. There were times of desperate need when even profane men prayed. In every land, too, the voice of prayer was heard as it had never been heard before. On one memorable occasion, when the news of the British retreat had come to the War Cabinet, the members sat for a while in deathly silence. Then one of them said, "It's Heaven help us now!" The Prime Minister caught up the words: "That's just where we are. Let us ask Heaven!" And the Conference became a prayer meeting.

But it is not only in the war with flesh and blood that we need God's help. Our worst enemies are the temptations to evil that lie in our own hearts.

And there is no better way of beating these enemies than by prayer. As General Gordon wrote to his sister, it not only gives us the mastery over our temptations, but it takes away the very wish to do evil, and fills our hearts with a love for what is good.

Prayer helps us in other troubles as well. I suppose no one had ever so many difficulties to contend with as Livingstone in the course of his last African journey. But he laid all of them before the Lord in prayer. Then he was able to meet them with a stout heart and a smiling face. His friend Stanley learned the same secret of strength and happiness. In the story he wrote of his own life he says: "On all my expeditions, prayer made me stronger, morally and mentally, than any of my non-praying companions. It did not blind my eyes, or dull my mind, or close my ears; but on the contrary it gave me confidence. It did more: it gave me joy and pride in my work, and lifted me hopefully over the one thousand five hundred miles of forest tracks, eager to face the day's perils and fatigues."

We have not difficulties like theirs. But we have all troubles of our own. Sometimes our lessons are very hard. Try as we may, we do not seem able to master them. Or we feel our work at home irksome. Often, too, our friends vex us. They will not fall in with our plans, or they are quarrelsome and spoil the game. So we are cross and irritable. If we learned to take these troubles to God, we should be wonderfully helped. And we do not need always to go on our knees with them. We can think little prayers, even while we are

busy at our work or play. And we shall find God as near to answer as when we kneel at our bedside.

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears,
And Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing,
And nearer than hands and feet."

TENNYSON.

XVIII

THE LORD MY BANNER

AN army on the field marches with colours flying. Above the quarters of the General floats the national Standard: the Union Jack, the Stars and Stripes, or the French tricolour. Each regiment has also its own flag, emblazoned with the names of famous victories in the past. When battle is joined, the flag is the centre of attack. If it be carried to the enemy's position, the battle is won; if it be captured, or trailed on the ground, the battle is lost. Thus in the days of close warfare the hottest fights were always round the flag. For the honour of the flag men would do the most daring deeds of valour. To save it from dishonour they would gladly give up their lives.

The reason is simply that the flag stands for country. Honour to the flag is honour to the country; dishonour to the flag is dishonour to the country.

When the children of Israel were marching through the desert, they had no flag to rally round. But after the Amalekites were defeated, Moses set up an altar, and called it *Jehovah-nissi,* "The Lord is my banner." He meant that the battle had been fought for His honour, and that the victory would help on the cause He had at heart. In building the altar, he wished to dedicate the peo-

ple afresh to His service. And if they were loyal to the flag, he could promise them victory over all their enemies, and a sure reward at the close of the campaign.

The banner which Moses set up at Rephidim had no emblem worked into it. But the flag we follow has the sign of the Cross. The story of how it was first raised in battle is of deep interest.

In the year 306 Constantine the Great succeeded his father Constantius as Roman Emperor. He was then commanding the Imperial troops in Britain, and could not return to Rome for several years. In his absence a rival General, named Maxentius, had himself proclaimed Emperor by his army, and ruled with great violence and injustice. Constantine quietly bided his time. At last, in the spring of 312, he crossed the Alps, and marched against his enemy. One night during the march he had a wonderful dream. He saw before him a shining white Cross, and underneath it the words, *In hoc signo vinces,* "In this sign thou shalt conquer." He was not yet a Christian, but he took it as a sign from heaven. So he made the Cross his emblem, and went on bravely to battle. The two armies met at the Mulvian Bridge near Rome. Constantine won a brilliant victory, and ascended the throne without further opposition. Soon he became an earnest Christian, and did all he could to make Christianity the religion of the Empire.

Since that day many wars have been fought under the sign of the Cross. The most famous were the Crusades of the Middle Ages, when the bravest soldiers of Europe poured into Palestine,

eager to wrest the Holy Sepulchre from the hand of the Turks. The Scottish wars of the Covenant were also wars for the Cross. And every war for freedom and justice has been inspired by that sign.

But these are not the only wars for the Cross. Nor are those who fight in them the only soldiers of the Cross. The missionary of Christ to the heathen is a real Crusader. For he seeks to carry the Cross to triumph to the ends of the earth. But we do not need to leave our homes to become Crusaders. Everyone is a Crusader who follows the standard of Jesus Christ. If we wish, then, to be good soldiers of the Cross, we must be true to our colours. We must never be ashamed to own our Lord, or to defend His cause. We must be proud to follow Him, ready to honour Him, and brave to do His will. Then we shall be conquerors in the fight with evil. And at the end we shall receive the victor's crown of glory.

"Brightly gleams our banner,
Pointing to the sky,
Waving on Christ's soldiers
To their home on high.

"Marching through the desert,
Gladly thus we pray,
Still with hearts united,
Singing on our way.

"When the march is over,
Then come rest and peace,
Jesus in His beauty,
Songs that never cease."

T. J. Potter.

XIX

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

FROM Rephidim it was but a short distance to Sinai, or Horeb, the mount of God. The distance was soon covered. And in the third month after they left Egypt, the children of Israel encamped on the grassy plain under the mount, where Moses had seen the vision of God in the burning bush.

It must have been with a strange rapture in his heart that he stood once more on the sacred spot. Perhaps he hoped to see the light of God still playing on the bush. But the vision had gone. Instead of that, a thick cloud rested on the top of the mountain. Then the thunder began to roar, and the lightning to flash. And all the people in the camp trembled with fear. But Moses had learned to see God in all things. So he went boldly up and down the mountain. And where others felt nothing but gloom and terror, he had a new sense of God's glory, and heard His voice pealing out the great commandments of life.

If we have ears to hear, God may still speak to us through cloud and storm. It was the voice of God in the thunder that led Martin Luther into the monastery of Erfurt, where he found the open Bible, and so became the father of the Reformation. And a modern poet like Tennyson can sing:

"God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law, the thunder is yet His voice."

But He speaks to us usually in the still, small voice of conscience, which tells us so clearly when we are right and wrong.

The famous American preacher, Theodore Parker, has given us the story of how he first heard the voice. He was then a little boy of four. His father had taken him out for a short walk, but sent him home alone. On the way he passed a shallow pond, where a young tortoise was sunning itself. In a spirit of boyish mischief he raised a stick to strike it. But all at once, he says, something checked his arm, and a voice within him spoke out clear and loud, "It is wrong." He dropped the stick, hurried home, told his mother the story, and asked her what voice it was that had spoken to him. She wiped a tear from her eye, and taking him in her arms said, "Some men call it conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God. If you listen and obey it, then it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear and disobey, then it will fade out little by little, and leave you all in the dark and without a guide. Your life depends on your heeding that little voice."

The sting of a bad conscience is real torture to the soul. No one has described it so well as Shakespeare in his Tragedy of King Richard the Third:

"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain."

It is still worse when we refuse to hear the warning voice. For awhile it may continue to trouble us. But its edge will grow duller and duller, until it ceases altogether to prick. Then we shall have nothing left to guide us. We may even go far wrong without knowing it. You remember how the Pharisees spoke of Jesus' mighty works as done by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, and how at last they crucified Him, with the idea that they were pleasing God. Their conscience had become so blinded by hatred that they could not distinguish right and wrong. This was what Jesus meant by sin against the Holy Ghost.

If we wish to be guided surely in all our ways, we must pay much heed to conscience. The more closely we follow it, the more clearly will it speak. Then we shall have a wonderful peace and joy in our hearts. This also has been finely described by Shakespeare through the lips of the fallen Wolsey, now come to himself and the Father. When his servant Cromwell asks him how he is, he answers cheerfully:

"Why, well: never so truly happy, Cromwell.
I know myself now; and I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience."

XX

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

THE people were still too terrified to hear the voice of God. So they begged Moses to go up the mountain again, and bring them the message in a way they could understand. At the bidding of God he took two tables of stone in his hand. He allowed no one to accompany him but Joshua, whom he left in the lower parts of the mountain. Then he himself entered into the midst of the cloud that lay on the top of it. And there he remained for forty days and nights, listening to the word of God, and chiselling out the Commandments on the two tables of stone.

In the simple form in which they appeared on the tables, the Ten Commandments would run as follows:—

I am Jehovah thy God.
I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any carved image.
III. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain.
IV. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
V. Honour thy father and thy mother.
VI. Thou shalt do no murder.
VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

X. Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbour's.

These Ten Commandments cover the chief duties of life. He who keeps them with a good conscience is safe from all gross sin. But one may keep the Commandments, and yet be far from perfect. The rich young ruler had observed them all from his youth up, but he felt there was something lacking, and he came to Jesus for guidance. And at once the Master placed His finger on the weak spot. To be good, it is not enough to shun what is evil. We must do right, both to God and to one another. Thus, instead of ten, Jesus gave us two New Commandments:—

I. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.

II. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The old Greeks had a fable about the Sirens, lovely sea nymphs that sat on a rock called Scylla, and by their beautiful singing lured sailors to destruction. It happened that Ulysses was passing that way on his voyage. Being warned by the goddess Circe, he stopped the ears of his sailors with wax, and then had himself lashed to the mast by strong cords. When they reached the spot, the sailors could not hear the music of the Sirens, and so steered the vessel safely past. Ulysses was enchanted by the sound, and struggled to break his cords. But they held him

tightly to the mast. Soon he was carried beyond the point of danger, and the music died away in the distance.

Some time afterwards the Argonauts were sailing that same way. But they had the famous Orpheus on board. When they came near the rock, Orpheus took up his lyre, and poured forth such heavenly music that the sailors had no ears for the Siren songs. In despair the Sirens leapt into the sea, and their spell was broken for ever.

The Ten Commandments are like the cords that bound Ulysses. They may keep us on the right line of life, but they have no power to win our hearts. The New Commandments of Jesus are like the music of Orpheus. They fill our hearts with a charm that breaks the spell of evil. If we love God with all our strength, we shall never think of dishonouring Him in any way. If we love our neighbours as ourselves, we shall never do them harm by word or deed. Instead, we shall try all we can to please God, and to treat one another as we should like to be treated ourselves.

But it may be said, we cannot love to order. No! we cannot love to order, even if Jesus commands us. We love only when our hearts are moved by love. And that is really how Jesus makes us love. His Commandments are no hard and fast orders. They are just the natural bidding of love. His life was one of pure, warm love to God and man. He loved the Father with all His heart. He loved every man and woman, even those who had sunk deep in sin. He loved them so much that he died for them. He loved little children. He took them in His arms, and blessed them. And He loves us

just as tenderly as He loved them. He rejoices with us when we are glad. He is full of sympathy with us when we are in trouble. He helps us out of our difficulties. He saves us from evil. He wishes to make our lives bright and good. And if we let His love into our hearts, we shall love Him as readily as we love our fathers and mothers. Then we shall love as He loved, and live as He lived.

"Oh, dearly, dearly has He loved!
And we must love Him too;
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do."

C. F. Alexander.

XXI

THE GOLDEN CALF

MOSES stayed so long on the top of Mount Sinai that the people thought they would never see him again. So they came to Aaron, and said, "Up, make us a god, who shall go before us!" And Aaron bade them break off their golden earrings, and bring them to him. And they did so. Then Aaron melted down the gold, and with a carving tool shaped it into the image of a young bull. And when the people saw it, they raised a shout, saying, "This is the god, O Israel, that brought thee up from the land of Egypt." And Aaron built an altar before it, and proclaimed a feast for the next day. So early that morning the people rose up, and offered sacrifices on the altar; then they sat down to eat and drink, and afterwards they began to sing and dance in honour of the image.

On the same day Moses was returning from the mount, with the two tables of stone in his hands. He had just met with Joshua when the noise of the revelry smote on their ears. Joshua was alarmed, and said, "There is a sound of war in the camp." But Moses answered him, saying, "It is neither the sound of the victors, nor the sound of the vanquished, but the sound of singers, that I hear." When he came nearer the camp, and

saw the people dancing round the calf, his anger waxed hot, and he threw the tables of stone out of his hands, and dashed them in pieces at the foot of the mount. Then he took the calf, and melted it in the fire, ground it into powder, and scattered it on water, and made the people drink it.

Next he turned upon Aaron, and said, "What wrong did this people do thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" And Aaron tried to excuse himself, saying, "Let not the anger of my lord wax hot! Thou knowest the people, how set they are on evil. For they said to me, 'Make us a god, who shall go before us, for as for this Moses—the man that brought us up from Egypt—we know not what is become of him.' And I said to them, 'Whosoever hath any gold, let him break it off!' So they gave it to me; and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

These words made Moses still more angry. So he stood at the gate of the camp, and called out, "He that is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me!" At once there gathered about him all the tribe of Levi. And Moses said to them, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, 'Gird every man his sword upon his thigh, and pass up and down the camp from gate to gate, and slay every man his brother, his comrade, and his neighbour.' " And the Levites did according to the word of Moses. And there fell that day of the people about three thousand men.

It was a terrible punishment. But the worship of idols had to be put down, just as mutiny has to be put down in an army. Only then could they go forward in safety.

We no longer make images of gold. But there are other forms of idolatry which are as displeasing to the Lord. Gold itself may be an idol. There are people among us, like Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice,* who think and dream of nothing but gold, and count human life cheap as dust if it stands in the way of their gain. Amusement also may be an idol. Even our work, our books, and our friendships may be idols, if they turn our affections away from God.

Now we must remember that all these things are good if they are rightly used. They only become idols when they take the place of God. So the way to keep from idolatry is to give Him the warmest spot in our hearts, and enjoy our money, our amusements, our work, our books, and our friendships as if He were enjoying them with us. Our delight in life will not be lessened by doing so. We shall, no doubt, cease to care for pleasures that are low and false. But all that gives us real enjoyment will become more attractive than ever. As Jesus said, if we put God first, all other good things will be added to us.

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.

"So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb."

W. Cowper.

XXII

A SHINING FACE

MOSES was justly grieved at the people's idolatry. But his heart was torn with sorrow for them. So next morning he went to the Lord, and pleaded with Him to forgive their sin. He was willing even to offer his life for their sake. "O Lord!" he said, "this people have sinned a great sin by making them a god of gold: yet now, I pray Thee, forgive their sin; and if not, blot my name out of the book of life which Thou hast written!"

He then begged the Lord to let him see His face, so that he might know Him better, and thus be able to guide His people more wisely. But the Lord said to Moses, "Thou canst not see my face; for no man shall see my face and live." Nevertheless, He bade him go up the mountain again the next morning, and promised that He would show him the glory of His character. He asked Moses also to take with him two fresh tables of stone, to replace the tables he had broken in his anger.

As soon as the sun had risen, Moses went up to Mount Sinai, with the two tables of stone in his hands, as the Lord had commanded him. When he entered the cloud at the top of the mountain, he called upon the name of the Lord. And the

Lord passed by, saying, "I am Jehovah, Jehovah, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and full of love and truth, keeping my love for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, but that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, even to the third and the fourth generation."

When Moses heard these words, he bowed his head to the earth, and worshipped, saying, "If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, I pray Thee, go in the midst of us—for this is a stiffnecked people—and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and make us Thine own inheritance!" And the Lord listened to his prayer, and promised to lead the people on their way, and to do such wonders for them that all the nations should see and acknowledge His working. But he warned him not to make any kind of covenant with these nations, lest the people should be tempted to forsake the Lord, and go astray after other gods. And Moses gave heed to all the words of the Lord. And he remained there for another period of forty days and nights, the Lord speaking with him "as a man speaketh unto his friend." And in the course of these forty days he carved the Ten Commandments on the new tables of stone.

Once more Moses came down from the mount, with the two tables in his hands. He called together Aaron and the people, to tell them what the Lord had spoken to him. But now a strange thing happened. The skin of his face shone so brightly that the people were afraid to come near him. Moses himself knew nothing about it. But

when they told him, he put a veil over his face. And this he did as often as he spoke to the people. But when he went into the presence of the Lord, he took the veil off, and spoke with Him "face to face."

I think we can understand how it was that Moses' face shone. He had been so near to God on Mount Sinai that he became like a mirror in which the glory of God was reflected. For the same reason Jesus' face shone as He prayed with His disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration.

We may still see the shining face when people are carried away by some great tide of feeling. One who heard Jenny Lind sing has told us: "I saw a plain girl when I went in; but when she began to sing, her face literally shone like that of an angel." Much the same thing has been said of Lincoln's speeches. As he sat on the platform, his face was all drawn and haggard. But when he stood up to speak, "he was transformed; his eye kindled, his voice rang, his face shone and seemed to light up the whole assembly."

But that which makes the face shine most brightly is love. You know how sweetly mother smiles when she gives us some kind gift. Her whole face seems to be lit up with love. And you may see the same look on the faces of other good men and women. As J. M. Barrie says, "Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves." There are many people, indeed, who carry sunshine on their faces all the time. Miss Irene Petrie, the Indian missionary, used to be known as The Sunbeam. Another

missionary heroine, Mrs. Orr Ewing, was called Glory-face. The greatest man I have ever known, the late Principal Rainy, had "a face like a benediction." And his little grandchild had learned the secret of it when she said, "Grandpapa must go to heaven every night, because he is so happy in the morning." Like Moses, he lived much with God on the mount; "and the skin of his face shone while God talked with him.

To wear the shining face, we do not need to have everything we could wish. You may have read the Life of Helen Keller. Since her infancy she has been blind and deaf, unable to see the beauty of the world, or to hear the pleasant voices of those she loves. Yet all who have met her speak of her shining face. When she was just eight years old, a gentleman said to her father, "I have lived long, and seen many happy faces; but I have never seen such a radiant face as this child's." Many years afterwards she spoke of herself as "the happiest girl in the world." And she gave this as the reason: "The thought that my dear Heavenly Father is always near, giving me abundantly of all those things which truly enrich life and make it sweet and beautiful, makes every deprivation seem of little moment compared with the countless blessings I enjoy."

This is the way to be really happy: to love God, and to be grateful to Him for His goodness. Jesus wishes us all to have this happiness in our hearts. But He wishes us also to let our happiness shine out upon others, so that they may become as happy as we are.

"Jesus bids us shine
With a pure, clear light,
Like a little candle
Burning in the night.
In this world of darkness
So let us shine—
You in your small corner,
And I in mine."

SUSAN WARNER.

XXIII

THE TENT OF MEETING

IT was now time for the children of Israel to go forward on their journey. The Lord had promised to be with them. So He asked Moses to prepare an Ark, or sacred Chest, to hold the two tables of stone. He bade him also set up a Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, where the people could gather together for worship. And Moses obeyed the word of the Lord. First he summoned the people, and told them what the Lord had asked of him. Then he invited them to bring gifts for the building. And he chose two skilled architects, Bezaleel and Aholiab, to superintend the work. So they built the Ark and the Tabernacle according to the pattern that the Lord had shown Moses on the mount. And in all their wanderings they carried the Ark at the head of the army, as the sign that He was with them on the march. And when they pitched their tents, they set up the Tabernacle in the midst, and worshipped Him in the beauty of holiness.

As you know, the Tabernacle was afterwards replaced by the Temple which Solomon built. Houses of worship, called Synagogues, were also erected in many cities of Palestine. As the Jews came to be scattered over the world, they built

Synagogues in all the different lands of their exile. And there they still meet, Sabbath by Sabbath, to worship God as their fathers did.

Our Tent of Meeting is the Church. It may be some great Cathedral, with its Gothic spire and richly stained windows, or a simple little building, with plain roof and walls. But if we worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, we shall find it to be "none other than the house of God, the very gate of heaven." No lovelier picture of the Church was ever drawn than Palace Beautiful in *The Pilgrim's Progress;* and this picture was taken from the humble Baptist chapel where Bunyan worshipped in Bedford. Another famous writer, Thomas Carlyle, has spoken of the rough thatched meeting-house in his native village as a true sanctuary of God, whose "pious heaven-sent influences" rested upon him all his life long.

While we are still at home with our parents, we are taught to love and honour the Church. But as we grow older, we may be tempted to neglect it. People will tell us that we can worship God just as well among the woods or in the green fields. That may be quite true. Nature is a Temple of the living God. And we ought to worship Him everywhere. But I fear those who spend their Sundays among the woods or in the green fields are not thinking much about God. They may begin, perhaps, with the wish to worship Him. But very soon they forget their wish, and so gradually lose the sense of worship, until they may be left without any thought of God in their hearts.

The modern poet, James Thomson, says he felt

"Too grateful to God for His Sabbath
To shut its hours in a Church."

So he spent the day with his companions

"Away in the green, green country,
Under the open sky;
Where the earth's sweet breath is incense,
And the larks sing psalms on high."

But it was not long before the song of psalms was silent, and he began to picture the world as a city of Dreadful Night from which every ray of light had vanished.

"In the endless nights, on my bed, where sleeplessly brooding I lie,
I burden the heavy gloom with a bitter and weary sigh:
No hope in this worn-out world, no hope beyond the tomb,
No living and loving God, but blind and stony Doom."

A far wiser poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes, used to say that he had a plant in his heart, called Reverence, which he needed to water once a week, to keep it fresh and fragrant. And one wiser than he, our Lord Jesus Himself, went every Sabbath to the Synagogue. He knew much more than the greatest of His teachers. But He felt that God was in His holy place. And, as He prayed there with His brethren, He was drawn closer to Him, and closer to them. And He left the Synagogue quickened and strengthened to do His deeds of love.

If Jesus found it needful to go to Church, we

need it all the more. Indeed, it is only through the common worship of the Church that we can grow together, in grace and knowledge of God, "unto the full measure of the stature of Christ."

The habit of going to Church may begin as a duty. But it will soon become a pleasure. We shall look upon the hour of worship as one of the brightest hours of the week. We shall even learn to love it as Jesus did.

"O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

"To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay."

S. T. Coleridge.

XXIV

MEN OF HONOUR

JUST before the camp was struck, Moses had a visit from Jethro and his son Hobab. They had learned of all that the Lord had done for him and his people, and they came to greet him on the way. When Moses heard they were coming, he went out to meet them. And they bowed to the ground, and kissed one another, and asked how each was. Then Moses brought them to his tent, and told them the full story of the deliverance from Egypt. And Jethro rejoiced and said, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you from the hand of Pharaoh and the Egyptians! Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods; for He hath overthrown His enemies by the pride of their own doings." Then he built an altar, and offered up sacrifices to the Lord. And Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to join him at the feast.

Next morning Moses took his seat at the gate, to try the cases that were brought to him for judgment. These were so many that the people crowded about him from sunrise till late in the evening. By the end of the day Moses was so tired that he could hardly speak. Jethro had been quietly watching the scene. And when it was all over, he came to Moses, and said, "What thou

doest is not good. Thou wilt certainly wear thyself out, and the people along with thee, for the work is too heavy for thee to do alone. Now hearken to the counsel I give thee: and may God be with thee! Choose from among all the people a number of able men, who fear God, men of truth, and such as hate bribery; and let them judge the people on all occasions. And it shall be, that every important case they shall bring to thee; but every small matter they shall decide themselves. In this way they shall bear the burden with thee; and thou shalt be able to hold out, while the people also shall go away contented, everyone to his own home."

Moses was only too glad to follow Jethro's advice. So he chose from among the people a number of able men, who feared God, men of truth, and such as hated bribery; and he made them rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people on all occasions. The hard cases they brought to Moses; but every small matter they decided themselves. Thus Moses was relieved of the burden of rule, while the people went home contented.

We all now act on Jethro's plan. Every city and village has its own magistrates, who are elected to office by the free choice of the people. It is a great honour to be thus called upon to rule. I trust that many of you may some day enjoy this honour. But if we are to be good rulers, we must be not only able men, but "such as fear God," loving truth, and hating bribery. Too many men accept posts of honour for the money they can

get out of them. If they do not actually take bribes, they at least use their influence to push their own selfish ends. But a true man of honour will put conscience before gain. You remember Washington's fine motto: "Labour to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience." On this motto he acted in every position of honour he held. So he was trusted by the whole people. The great Duke of Wellington was equally sensitive to the voice of conscience. Once when he had the chance of winning a victory by shady means, he said, "I would willingly give Gwalior ten times over, or all the other fortresses in India, rather than risk the loss of our reputation for scrupulous good conscience." No wonder that such a man came to be regarded as his country's "tower of strength." And, thank God! we have had many others of the same fine metal as they—men like Pitt, and Peel, and Gladstone, and Lincoln, and Roosevelt, and Wilson—who were always true to the call of duty and honour. Such men have raised our name high in the world. And at the same time they have left us an example to follow after.

But it is not only in public office that we must show ourselves men of honour. We should be just as conscientious in our business. You hear it said, "Get on! By honest means, if you can. But by any means, get on!" Advice of this kind is as wrong as it can be. Honesty is the only way to real success. When Lincoln was a young man, he kept a small country store. One evening he found that he had charged a customer a few cents too much. So, as soon as he had closed the store,

he put on his hat, and walked several miles to give back the money. It was easy to foretell that a young man like this would get on in life. Not necessarily that he should become rich! There is a success that is far higher than riches, the success of noble deeds nobly done. This was the success which Lincoln won in such full measure. And it is a success that all of us may win. If we act honestly, we shall build for ourselves a character that will stand for ever, respected alike by God and man.

"The man of life upright,
Whose guileless heart is free
From all dishonest deeds,
Or thought of vanity;

"The man whose silent days
In harmless joys are spent,
Whom hopes cannot delude
Nor sorrow discontent:

"That man needs neither towers
Nor armour for defence,
Nor secret vaults to fly
From thunder's violence:

"He only can behold
With unaffrighted eyes
The horrors of the deep
And terrors of the skies.

"Thus scorning all the cares
That fate or fortune brings,
He makes the heaven his book,
His wisdom heavenly things;

"Good thoughts his only friends,
His wealth a well-spent age,
The earth his sober inn
And quiet pilgrimage."

THOMAS CAMPION.

XXV

A MODEL SCOUT

WE all know what scouts are. They are the eyes of an army. In the old days of Indian warfare they were sent into the forest to search for the enemy. They would crawl along the ground, or hide among the bushes, looking for footprints, or marks cut in the trunks of trees, or strange movements of the leaves. And when they had discovered where the enemy was, they would guide their men by some secret path through the danger zone. Scouting is very different now. Much of it is done by aeroplane. And when scouts are sent on foot, they go usually by night, carefully disguised, so as to pass unobserved through the enemy's ranks, and gather information about their trenches, their barbed-wire entanglements, their guns, and so on. But whether on foot or in the air, the first thing needful for a good scout is to have eyes in his head. And this is the great lesson that a Boy Scout learns. Wherever he goes, he knows how to use his eyes.

The children of Israel were now coming to the most difficult part of their journey. It was a land of jagged rocks and deep valleys, where the enemy might fall upon them at any moment. So Moses felt he needed a scout. No doubt, the pillar of cloud and fire was there to show them

the way. But what was still needed was someone to guide them through the dangerous valleys, to select the best camping-grounds, and to warn them of the approach of the enemy. And the very man for the purpose was Hobab, the son of Jethro. He was familiar with every foot of the ground. He knew the safe paths through the valleys. He knew also the open plains where they could most suitably pitch their tents. And he had been trained from his boyhood to use his eyes in detecting the enemy's trail.

So, when Jethro was returning home, Moses begged that Hobab might remain with him, and act as a scout for the Israelites. And when Hobab refused, Moses urged him, saying, "Leave us not, I pray thee. For thou knowest where we should encamp in the desert. Be thou eyes for us. And it shall be that, whatever good the Lord shall do for us, the same will we do for thee." Then Hobab yielded to Moses' request, and guided him and his people through the desert.

We, too, need scouts for the journey of life. We may have Jesus to lead us. Yet we need others to help us in the difficult places. When we are young, our fathers and mothers are our best guides. They know far more about life than we do. They can set us on the right lines, and help us over the rough and dangerous spots. If we follow them, we shall not go wrong. But sooner or later we must leave home, and strike out a path for ourselves. Then we must choose other scouts to guide us. These scouts are just the friends we make. Where our friends lead, we can hardly help following. So we must be very care-

ful in our choice of friends. A good friend will guide us on the way to heaven; a bad friend will lead us straight to sin and death. A good friend is one of Jesus' scouts; a bad friend is a scout of the evil one.

But we must not be content to have good scouts to guide us. We should try to be scouts ourselves. Jesus wishes to have all our friends on His side; and we must do our best to lead them to Him. We do not need to be always talking to them about Jesus. The surest way to win them is just to live as He would like us to live. Then we shall be His true scouts, and our friends will follow us gladly.

David Livingstone was one of Jesus' bravest scouts. When he was travelling through Africa, he was often unable to speak the language of the people. But he was always able to speak the language of love and kindness. And by the use of that language he won many of them for Jesus. It was the same when he was with white men. Henry M. Stanley writes of him: "I went to Livingstone, as prejudiced as the biggest atheist in London. For months after we met, I simply found myself listening to him, wondering at the old man carrying out all that was said in the Bible. He preached no sermon to me, by word of mouth; but each day of my companionship with him witnessed a sermon acted. Little by little his sympathy for others became contagious; my sympathy was aroused; seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went quietly about his business, I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it."

We have now Girl Guides as well as Boy Scouts. A Girl Guide could have no better example to follow than Florence Nightingale. She was a rich man's daughter. She lived in a beautiful home, amid comforts of every kind. But she always loved to share her good things with her neighbours. As a young girl she used to visit the poor and sick near her home. She once bound up the wounded leg of a shepherd's dog that had been left to die. Then she heard the cry of the suffering soldiers in the Crimea, and went out there with a little company of women like herself. Day by day she nursed the sick and wounded. Often at night she would go round the wards, with a lamp in her hand, to soothe the fevered brows, to speak a word of cheer to the weary, and to point the dying to the great Healer and Friend of men. So the house of suffering became a house of love. Men would kiss her very shadow on the wall. And her name will stand for all time high in the roll of those who have guided others to the light.

"Lo! in that house of misery
A lady with a lamp I see
Pass through the glimmering gloom,
And flit from room to room.

"And slow, as in a dream of bliss,
The speechless sufferer turns to kiss
Her shadow, as it falls
Upon the darkening walls.

"As if a door in heaven should be
Opened and then closed suddenly,
The vision came and went,
The light shone and was spent.

"On England's annals, through the long
Hereafter of her speech and song,
That light its rays shall cast
From portals of the past.

"A Lady with a Lamp shall stand
In the great history of the land,
A noble type of good,
Heroic womanhood."

LONGFELLOW.

XXVI

A FAINT HEART

THE Israelite host marched three days northward from Sinai. Then some of the rabble began to murmur because they had nothing to eat but manna. The trouble spread through all the ranks. And when they remembered the good things they enjoyed in Egypt, they sat down and wept, saying, "Oh, that we could have flesh to eat!"

Moses was sick in heart, and cried to the Lord, "Where can I find flesh to give to all this people? And why hast Thou ill treated Thy servant in laying the burden of this people upon me? I am not able to bear the burden alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if Thou continue to deal thus with me, slay me at once, I pray Thee, that I may no longer look upon my misery!"

We are surprised to hear a man like Moses give way to his despair. But other brave hearts have had their moments of weakness. The prophet Elijah was so afraid of Queen Jezebel that he fled to the desert of Sinai, and prayed the Lord to take away his life, for he was not better than his fathers. John the Baptist was led by his sufferings in prison to doubt whether Jesus was really the Christ. Jesus Himself, in the Garden of Gethsemane, fell into great agony of soul, and

besought His Father, if it were possible, to let that cup pass from Him.

The way to conquer our weakness is to cast our burden upon the Lord. So Elijah and John the Baptist found it. So Jesus found it. So Moses also found it.

No sooner had he prayed, than the Lord answered him, saying, "Is the Lord's hand shortened, that He cannot help? Say thou to the people, 'Make yourselves ready by the morrow, and the Lord will give you flesh to eat, so much indeed that it will become loathsome to you.' " Moreover, He bade him choose seventy of the elders of Israel, and bring them before Him at the Tent of Meeting. Then He would put His spirit upon them; and they would help him to bear the burden of the people.

So it came to pass on the morrow, that the Lord sent a steady south wind from the sea. And there came up with the wind another great flight of quails, which fell round about the camp, for the space of a day's journey on either side. And the people gathered them all that day and the next, each of them at least ten omers, that is, one hundred bushels. And they ate their fill of the quails, and the rest they cured by spreading them out to dry in the sun. And they continued to eat them for one whole month, until they became as weary of them as they had been of the manna.

On that same day Moses chose seventy of the elders of Israel, and brought them before the Lord at the Tent of Meeting. And the Lord put His spirit upon them, and they prophesied like Moses. And they shared with him the burden of ruling

the people. So Moses was strengthened for his task.

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob,
And speakest, O Israel:
My way is hid from the Lord,
And my cause unminded by my God?

"Hast thou not known,
Hast thou not heard:
That the Lord is an everlasting God,
The Creator of the ends of the earth?

"He fainteth not, neither is weary;
His wisdom is without measure.
He giveth power to the faint,
And addeth strength to the weak.

"The young men may faint and grow weary,
And the flower of them utterly fail:
But they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength,
They shall mount up with wings as eagles;

"They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint."

ISAIAH xl., 27-31.

XXVII

THE BRAVE SPIES

THE people marched on to Kadesh, in the desert of Paran, which lay due south of Palestine. And the Lord bade Moses send men to spy out the land. So Moses chose twelve men, one from each of the tribes, and sent them to spy out the land, and bring him back a report of its fields and vineyards, its cities and villages, its fortresses, and the people that dwelt in them. And the twelve men went up, and spied out the land, from the desert of Judah to Rehob, at the sources of the Jordan.

At the end of forty days the men returned to Moses, bearing a great cluster of grapes which they had cut from a vineyard in the valley of Eshcol, near the city of Hebron. They brought also pomegranates and figs from Palestine. And they made their report, saying, "We came to the land whither thou sentest us, and truly it floweth with milk and honey. Behold! this is some of the fruit of it. But the people that dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very great. We saw also the children of Anak there; and we were in our own eyes but as grasshoppers before them, and so were we also in their eyes."

When the people heard this report of the land,

they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they kept weeping all that night. And in the midst of their tears they poured out complaints against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, that we may fall by the sword, and have our wives and little ones made a prey? Would that we had died in the land of Egypt, or else in the desert!" And they plotted one with another, saying, "Come, let us choose a leader, and return to Egypt!"

Then two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, tried to still the clamour of the people, saying, "The land is an exceeding good land. Let us go up at once to possess it! For we are well able to overcome it." But the rest of the spies said, "We are not able to go up against the people of the land; for they are stronger than we." And Joshua and Caleb pressed them, saying, "If the Lord take pleasure in us, He will surely bring us into this land. Therefore rebel not against the Lord, nor be afraid of the people of the land. For the protection of their gods shall be removed from them; and they shall be as bread to our mouths."

We have still people among us like the ten faithless spies. They would like to enter the good land, but are kept back by the difficulties they meet. At school they find their lessons too hard for them. When they go out to business, they shy at their work. So, while their comrades climb the ladder of success, they are left at the foot.

There are many, also, who wish to follow Jesus, but are afraid of the lions in the way. Or, if they do follow Him, they are like Bunyan's Mr. Fear-

ing, who "was dejected at every difficulty, and stumbled at every straw that anybody cast in his way." A pilgrim of this sort may crawl along to the Celestial city; but he will do nothing big or bold.

The true man will never be afraid of difficulties. He will rather say, with the brave Lord Nelson, "difficulties and dangers do but increase my desire of attempting them."

At the battle of Lodi, when the French were attacking the bridge, an officer said to Napoleon, "It is impossible that any men can force their way across that narrow bridge, in the face of such an annihilating storm of balls as must be encountered." Napoleon at once broke in, "How? Impossible! That word is not French."

The word can as little have a place in the speech of those who follow Jesus. He has told us that with God all things are possible. So all things are possible for those who serve Him.

Robert Morrison was on his way out to China, as the first missionary of the Gospel there. The captain of the ship said to him, "And so, Mr. Morrison, you really expect that you will make an impression on the idolatry of the great Chinese Empire?" Morrison quietly answered, "No, sir! but I expect God will."

This is the faith that does great things for God and man, the faith that overcomes the world.

"Somebody said that it couldn't be done,
But he with a chuckle replied
That 'Maybe it couldn't,' but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he tried.

So he buckled right in, with a trace of a grin
On his face: If he worried, he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done—and he did it."

EDGAR A. GUEST.

XXVIII

PARDON AND PUNISHMENT

THE children of Israel refused to listen to Joshua and Caleb. They even threatened to stone them with stones. Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and He said to Moses, "How long will this people continue to despise me, notwithstanding all the signs which I have wrought among them? I will surely smite them with pestilence, and will cut them off from inheriting the land, and will raise of thee a nation greater and mightier than they."

Moses was deeply distressed, and prayed to the Lord to pardon the people. And the Lord hearkened to his prayer, and said, "I have pardoned them according to thy word. Nevertheless, as I live, none of them that despised me shall see the land which I sware unto their fathers. Only Joshua and Caleb shall enter into possession of it, because they had another spirit in them, and followed me with all their heart. The little ones also will I bring into the land. But they shall be wanderers in the wilderness for forty years, and shall bear the burden of their fathers' guilt, until their bodies be consumed in the wilderness."

Then the Lord sent a deadly plague, which destroyed the spies that had brought back an evil report of the land. Only Joshua and Caleb were

left alive of the twelve. And the people mourned greatly. When Moses told them the words of the Lord, they confessed their fault, saying, "We have sinned." And they said one to another, "Come, let us go up to the place which the Lord hath promised us." But Moses said, "Why should ye further disobey the commandment of the Lord? Go not up, for the Lord is not in your midst; therefore your purpose cannot prosper, but ye shall be smitten down before your enemies, and shall fall by the sword." But they defied him, and marched against the hill country of Judah, though Moses refused to let the Ark of the Lord accompany them. And the Amalekites and the Canaanites came down upon them, and beat them back, and slew many of them. And the rest became wanderers in the wilderness. And only after forty years, when all the rebellious people were dead, did the Lord permit their children to go up and possess the land.

We love to think of God as a God that pardons. We forget that pardon may go hand in hand with punishment. A father has often to punish while he pardons. And God also may punish while He pardons.

The prodigal son was welcomed home with joy. His father ran to meet him, fell on his neck, and kissed him. He clothed him in the best robe, put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. Then the fatted calf was killed, and the house rang with music and dancing. But all the father's love could not give him back the substance he had wasted in riotous living. So forgiveness cannot steady the drunkard's shaken nerves, or heal the

diseases that sinful pleasure brings. And it cannot undo the wrong we have done to others.

A young man leads his companion into evil ways. He repents, and is forgiven. But his companion still plunges on the road to ruin. At last he dies a sinner's death. That young man will never be able to forget the wrong he has done to his companion. The memory of it will be like a thorn in his conscience all his life. It will even spoil his enjoyment of heaven.

And the worst of it is, that others may suffer for our sins. A bad girl fills her mother's heart with shame. A bad boy brings his father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. A bad man leaves his children a terrible inheritance of grief. Truly, as Shakespeare says,

"The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones."

XXIX

A CONSUMING FIRE

SOME time afterwards three men, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, raised a mutiny against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Ye take too much power upon you, seeing that all the people are holy, and the Lord is in their midst." And two hundred and fifty of the chief men of Israel joined in the mutiny. When Moses heard of it, he sent for Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. But they refused to come, saying, "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to slay us in the wilderness, but thou must needs also make thyself a prince over us? Too long hast thou been throwing dust in the eyes of this people! Therefore we will not come up."

Then Moses was very wroth, and he laid the matter before the Lord. And the Lord said, "Bid the people remove themselves from about the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram!" And they did so. Then Moses said to the people, "If these men die the common death of men, the Lord hath not sent me; but if the Lord do a new thing, and the ground open its mouth, and swallow them up, then ye shall understand that these men have despised the Lord." And as soon as he had spoken, there

came a great earthquake, and the ground opened its mouth, and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with their households and all that belonged to them. Fire also fell from heaven, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that had joined them. So the mutiny was stamped out.

And awe came over the people when they saw the earthquake and the fire. But on the morrow they murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Ye have slain the people of the Lord." And Moses and Aaron looked towards the Tent of Meeting; and behold! the glory of the Lord stood over it. And the Lord said, "Get you up from among this people, that I may consume them in a moment!" And at the word a plague broke out among them. Then Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces, and pleaded with the Lord to spare the people. And when they had ceased praying, Aaron ran into the midst of the people, and offered sacrifice for them. And the anger of the Lord was removed, and the plague ceased.

God no longer stamps out mutiny in this way. But He still sends His fire upon the earth. It may be the fire of war, or the fire of pain; it may be the fire of a great prophet's voice, or the quiet fire of conscience. Most of us dread fire in all its forms. But it may be turned into a mighty power for good. It burns, indeed, but it cleanses. It licks up the base metal, but it makes the sterling gold shine out. So when God sends His fire upon the earth, He wishes to purge it of all that is false and foul, so that truth may come to light, and justice, goodness, and love may reign among us.

"As gold is refined in the furnace,
So He fines the hearts of men.
The purge of the flame doth rid them of shame,
When He tries the hearts of men.
Oh, better than gold, yea, than much fine gold,
When He tries the hearts of men,
Are Faith, and Hope, and Truth, and Love,
And the Wisdom that cometh from above,
When He tries the hearts of men."

JOHN OXENHAM.

XXX

THE GRAVES OF A HOUSEHOLD

MOSES had many a trouble to bear during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. But he was bravely supported by Miriam and Aaron. Only once do we read of a quarrel between them. In all other difficulties they stood by him, helping him with their counsel and encouragement. But the time came when their loyalty was to be quenched in death.

The forty years were almost over, and the children of Israel had returned to Kadesh. There Miriam fell sick. Moses and Aaron tended her with loving care. But she gradually grew worse, and died. And Moses and Aaron buried her in the desert of Paran.

Soon afterwards the march to Palestine began. This time Moses resolved to approach it, not over the hill country of Judah, but by the longer route east of the Jordan. The nearest way led through the land of Edom. So Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom, asking permission to pass through his country. But he refused, saying, "Thou shalt not pass through." So the people turned about, and journeyed through the desert to the south of Edom, between that land and the Red Sea. And in a few days they reached Mount Hor.

Here God spoke to Moses, saying, "Aaron is now to be gathered to his people. Take thou him, and Eleazar his son, and bring them to the top of Mount Hor. And strip him of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son. So shall he be gathered to his people, and Eleazar his son shall be priest in his place."

Moses did as the Lord commanded. He and Aaron went with Eleazar to the top of Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation of Israel. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar. And Aaron died and was buried at the top of Mount Hor. And Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And the children of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days. Then they went on their way.

It must have been a sore grief for Moses to part with those he had loved so dearly. But his grief is common to all men. The happiest homes are broken up. One after another passes into the silent land. Often their graves are "severed far and wide, by mount, and stream, and sea." In this life we can meet no more. But Jesus has told us of another life, in which the Father brings together His scattered family, to dwell with Him in the home of endless light and love.

"No home on earth is like it,
Or can with it compare,
For everyone is happy,
Nor could be happier, there."

ALBERT MIDLANE.

XXXI

THE SERPENT OF BRASS

FROM Mount Hor the road lay through a wild and barren country, where they were again reduced to manna. The people were greatly discouraged. And they murmured against the Lord, and against Moses, saying, "Why have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? For there is neither bread nor water here; and our soul loatheth this vile food."

The Lord was displeased at their murmurings, and He sent serpents among them, which stung them with a fiery sting, so that many of them died. And they came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, in that we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee. Intreat the Lord, therefore, that He may take away the serpents from us!"

Then Moses prayed to the Lord for them. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make thee an image of one of the serpents, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that, if anyone is bitten by a serpent, when he seeth the image, he shall recover." So Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it on a pole. And it came to pass that, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked upon the serpent of brass, he recovered.

We know how Jesus used this story. When Nicodemus came to Him, asking the way of eter-

nal life, He said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The serpent of brass could only heal the wounds of the flesh. The Cross of Jesus heals the wounds of the soul. It brings us pardon and peace, freedom of spirit, comfort and joy, a heart full of love and gratitude to God, power to overcome evil, and strength to do good, the presence of the Spirit all through our lives, and the promise of everlasting glory in heaven.

"The Cross! it takes our guilt away;
It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,
And sweetens every bitter cup;

"It makes the coward spirit brave,
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;
It takes its terror from the grave,
And gilds the bed of death with light;

"The balm of life, the cure of woe,
The measure and the pledge of love,
The sinner's refuge here below,
The angel's theme in heaven above."

THOMAS KELLY.

XXXII

FIGHTS BY THE WAY

WEARILY the children of Israel toiled through the desert round Edom, till they reached Iye-abarim, on the eastern border of Moab, over against the Dead Sea. There they encamped for a short time, and then moved towards the Sea. The first night they pitched their tents in the valley of the Zered, a tributary of the Arnon, which lay between Moab and the land of the Amorites. Then they crossed the steep ravines of the Arnon, and struck into the wilderness to the north of it. Soon they came to an ancient well, which Moses and the rulers of the people opened up with their staves. They drank of the refreshing water, and sang a merry song:

"Spring up, well:
Sing in response to it—
Well that the princes digged,
That the rulers of the people delved,
With their sceptres and their staves,
A gift from the desert."

Their way now ran through the land of the Amorites. So Moses sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, saying, "Let us pass through thy land! We will not turn aside into

field or vineyard: we will not drink of the water of the wells; but we will go by the king's highway, until we have passed through thy territory." Sihon would not permit them, but gathered together his men to fight against Israel. The armies met at Jahaz, on the border of the land. There the Israelites won a decisive victory, and pursued the Amorites as far north as the Jabbok, and captured all their cities.

Then they crossed the Jabbok, and encamped on the fertile plains of Bashan, just over the Jordan from Galilee. When Og, king of Bashan, heard of it, he marched down in force, and joined battle at Edrei, on the gorge of the Jarmuk. But the Lord said to Moses, "Fear him not; for I have delivered him and all his people into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon, king of the Amorites." So Israel fought with Og, king of Bashan, and smote him and all his people, and took possession of his land. And in after days they sang this song of victory:

"Praise ye the Lord,
For the Lord is good—
He who smote great nations,
And slew mighty kings:
Sihon king of the Amorites,
And Og king of Bashan;
And gave their land for an heritage,
An heritage to Israel His people."

You remember the fights by the way in *The Pilgrim's Progress.* When Christian is passing through the Valley of Humiliation, he is attacked by the foul friend Apollyon, and has to do battle

for his life. The battle lasts for above half a day. Christian is wounded in his head, his hand, and his foot. Apollyon closes upon him, gives him a dreadful fall, and sends his good sword flying out of his hand. Christian begins to despair of his life. But as Apollyon is fetching his last blow, to make a full end of him, he catches his sword again, saying, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I fall, I shall arise." And with that he gives Apollyon a deadly thrust, which makes him draw back. And Christian strikes at him again, saying, "Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." And Apollyon spreads forth his dragon wings, and speeds him away, so that Christian sees him no more. He has afterwards to fight with the demons in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and with Giant Despair in Doubting Castle. Again he is driven almost to despair. But with the key of Promise he unlocks the gates of Doubting Castle, and wins his way back to the path. So onward he goes, from victory to victory, until he is welcomed to the presence of the King with shouting and sound of trumpet, with the ringing of bells and the glad voice of One that said, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

We, too, have our fights by the way. We have to fight with evil thoughts, and temptations to weakness and cowardice, ill temper, selfishness, foul and cruel speech, hardness of heart, and disobedience to our parents and teachers. Our enemies are strong. Time and again we fall. But Jesus is stronger than our enemies. In His strength we shall rise like Christian, and strike

them a deadly blow. And each victory will help us "some other to win." Fighting manfully onward, we shall subdue the dark passions within, and the fierce foes without. And at the end we, too, shall enter into the presence of the King, complete through Him that strengthens us.

"From strength to strength go on;
Wrestle, and fight, and pray;
Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day;

"That, having all things done,
And all your conflicts passed,
Ye may o'ercome through Christ alone,
And stand complete at last."

CHARLES WESLEY.

XXXIII

A FALSE PROPHET

THE children of Israel were now in possession of all the land east of the Jordan. Moses divided the land between the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. Then he led the people back to the plains of Moab, and encamped near the fords of the Jordan, opposite Jericho.

Now when Balak, king of Moab, saw the Israelites encamped in his land, he was sorely afraid, and sent messengers laden with rich gifts to a prophet of Midian, called Balaam, the son of Beor, saying, "Behold! there is a people come out of Egypt; and behold! they cover the face of the earth; and they are now dwelling over against me, and they are too powerful for me: come, therefore, I pray thee, and curse this people for me! then perchance I may be able to overcome them, and drive them out of my land; for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

This Balaam was a man through whom God spoke. But he loved money, even more than he loved the word of God. When he saw the gifts in the hands of Balak's messengers, he wished to go with them, and do as Balak had asked him. So he invited the messengers to stay with him

that night, and he would consult the Lord, and tell them in the morning what the Lord said to him.

That night God came to Balaam, and said, "What men are these with thee?" And he told Him. Then God said, "Thou shalt not go with them; nor shalt thou curse this people: for they are blessed." And Balaam rose up in the morning, and went to the messengers, and said, "Get you back to your land; for the Lord refuseth to let me go with you." So the messengers left him, and returned to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuseth to come with us."

Then Balak sent more messengers, of higher rank than the last. And they came to Balaam, and said, "Thus saith Balak, 'Let nothing, I pray thee, prevent thee from coming to me! for I will show thee very great honour, and do for thee whatsoever thou askest: come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people!' " Balaam answered them, saying, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do either less or more." Yet he was anxious to go with them, and invited them also to stay with him for the night, and he would consult the Lord again, and tell them in the morning what new word the Lord might speak to him.

God now saw that Balaam was determined to go with the messengers. So that night He came to him, and said, "Seeing these men have come to call thee, rise up, and go with them! howbeit, thou shalt do only what I say unto thee." Then Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with them.

Now when Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Ir, on the border of Moab. And he brought him to a hill overlooking the edge of the Israelite camp. And Balaam bade him build seven altars, and get ready seven bullocks and seven rams. And he did so. And they offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand thou by the offerings! and I will go higher up the hill: perchance the Lord will come to meet me; then I will tell thee whatsoever He showeth me." And Balaam went to the bare top of the hill. And the Lord met him, and showed him a vision. Then He put a word in his mouth, and bade him return to Balak, and speak according to that word. So Balaam returned to Balak, and took up his parable, and said:

"Balak brought me from Edom,
Moab's king from the hills of the East:
Come, said he, curse me Jacob;
Come, prithee, damn me Israel!
But how can I curse whom God hath not cursed,
Or how can I damn whom the Lord hath not damned?
From the top of the rocks I see him,
From the crest of the hills I behold him—
A people that dwelleth apart,
Nor is counted as one of the nations.
Who can measure the dust of Jacob,
Or number the myriads of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my end be like his!"

When Balak heard these words, he was filled with anger against Balaam, and said, "What hast

thou done to me? I brought thee to curse mine enemies; and behold! thou hast done nothing but bless them." And Balaam answered him, saying, "Must I not be careful to speak that which the Lord putteth in my mouth?" Then Balak said to him, "Come, I pray thee, to another place, from whence thou mayest see all of the people: and curse me them from thence!" So he took him to the top of Pisgah, a high mountain range from which he could see the whole camp. And again he built seven altars. And they offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. And Balaam bade Balak stand by the offerings, while he went on to meet the Lord. And once more the Lord met him, and put a word in his mouth, and bade him return to Balak, and speak according to that word. And he returned to Balak, and took up his parable, and said:

"Rise up, Balak, and hear;
Listen to me, son of Zippor:
God is not man, to belie Him,
Nor son of man, to change.
Hath He said, and will not do it,
Or spoken, and will not fulfil it?
Behold! He brought me to bless,
So I bless, and will not recall it.
I see no ill in Jacob,
I behold no trouble in Israel:
For the Lord his God is with him,
And the King's hurrah rings through him.
Lo! the people doth rise like a lioness,
Like a lion he doth lift himself up;
Nor will couch till he eateth the prey,
And drinketh the blood of the slain."

Then Balak said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take thee to yet another place: it may please God that thou shouldest curse me them from thence." So he took him to the top of Mount Peor, directly above the plain where the camp lay. And again he built seven altars. And they offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. But this time Balaam went no further on to seek for a vision. Seeing that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he cast his eyes upon the plain. And when he saw Israel encamped, each tribe in its own tents, the spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said:

"Thus saith Balaam, son of Beor,
The man whose sight is clear—
That seeth the vision of the Almighty,
Falling in trance, but with open eyes:
How lovely thy tents, O Jacob,
Thy dwellings, O Israel!
As valleys that stretch afar,
As gardens watered by rivers;
As oaks that the Lord hath planted,
As cedars beside the waters.
Waters shall flow from his buckets,
And his seed dwell by many waters.
His king shall be mightier than Agag,
And his kingdom exalted on high.
Blessed be he that blesseth thee,
And cursed he that curseth thee!"

Balak's anger was still more kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together, and said, "I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold! thou hast done nothing but bless them

these three times: so now flee thou back to thy place! I purposed to show thee very great honour, and behold! the Lord hath kept thee back from honour." And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not speak to the messengers thou sentest me, saying, 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind?' What the Lord speaketh, that must I speak. And now, behold! I go to mine own people: but come, and I will show thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days." So Balaam took up his parable again, and said:

"Thus saith Balaam, son of Beor,
The man whose sight is clear—
That heareth the words of God,
And knoweth the knowledge of the Most High:
I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not nigh.
There gleameth a star from Jacob,
There riseth a sceptre from Israel.
He shall smite the temples of Moab,
The crown of all sons of pride."

If Balaam had only been obedient to the heavenly vision, he might have become a great prophet. But he still hankered after Balak's gifts. So he went home to Midian, and there plotted with his people against Israel. He not only induced many of them to marry Midianite women, but tempted them also to worship the Baal or false god of Peor. And the Lord was angry with His people, and sent a plague, which destroyed thousands of them. He bade Moses also take vengeance upon

the Midianites for their treachery. So Moses armed the warriors of Israel, and led them against the Midianites. And they defeated them utterly, and slew every man in arms. And with the others they put their king and princes to the sword. "Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword." He had prayed that he might die the death of the righteous: he died the death of a traitor.

"Be not deceived;
God is not mocked:
For whatsoever a man soweth,
That shall he also reap."
GAL. vi, 7.

XXXIV

A DEATH ON THE HILLTOP

THE days of wandering in the wilderness were now over. Only the Jordan had to be crossed. Moses was by this time an old man of one hundred and twenty years. Yet he was as young in spirit as ever. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." After all he had done for his people, he might have expected to lead them into the Promised Land. But he had once given way to his temper, and the Lord had said he should not enter the land, though he might look upon it with his eyes.

So when the Midianites were defeated, the Lord showed Moses a mountain in Moab called Nebo, the highest of the Pisgah range, and said to him, "Get thee up into this mountain, and view the land which I have given to the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered to thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered."

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to the top of Mount Nebo, and cast his eyes over the land. It was truly a wonderful sight that opened out before him. At his feet lay the Jordan, trailing its way through the jungle like a great serpent. Beyond it was Jericho, the city of

palm trees. From Jericho a road wound up the hill to Jerusalem, with its grim fortress standing out on the sky-line. All round it were the mountains of Judah, their slopes terraced by rich green vineyards. To the north lay the land of Samaria, and beyond it the valley of Jezreel, with its smiling meadows and corn-fields. Still further north rose the highlands of Galilee, the deep blue waters of the Lake shining like sapphire. And away in the distance towered the snowy peaks of Lebanon and Hermon.

As Moses gazed upon the scene, the Lord said, "This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to thy seed.' I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes; but thou shalt not go over thither." So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor, though "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." And the children of Israel mourned for him thirty days.

XXXV

THE NEW LEADER

THE Israelites were now left without their old and trusted leader. But a new leader was at hand. Joshua, the son of Nun, had been Moses' servant all these years. He had gone with him to the mount. He had fought for him against the Amalekites. He had been one of the two faithful spies, and had tried to inspire the people with his own fine courage. So now the Lord said to him, "Moses my servant is dead; arise, therefore, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them."

It was a hard task that lay before him. Palestine was a good land. But its cities were strong and well fortified. Their walls, too, were manned by the giant sons of Anak, in whose eyes the children of Israel felt themselves but grasshoppers. It needed a brave man to carry through the task. So the first charge the Lord gave Joshua was this: "Be strong, and of a good courage"; "Be strong and very courageous."

Above all things a soldier must have courage. As the old Frenchman said, "Courage, courage, always courage!" Without courage there is no hope of victory. It is the same in the good fight of faith. If we are to conquer, we must have

courage. Often it requires more courage to stand up against wrong-doing than to face the cannon and the bayonet. Many a brave soldier has gone down helplessly in this fight. When he is battling for king and country, he is bold as a lion. But in the battle with evil, he has no courage to hold out even against a comrade's jest.

There was a young English schoolboy called John Coleridge Patteson. He was a fine scholar, a keen cricketer, a dashing football player, and a downright good fellow, full of frolic and fun. But he would put up with nothing coarse. Once at a cricket dinner one of the team sang a vile song. Patteson immediately called out, "If that does not stop, I shall leave the room." As no notice was taken, he and a few other brave lads did leave the room. He then sent word to the captain that, unless an apology was made, he should give up his place on the team. The apology was made, and he kept his place. His friends admired his pluck so much that they presented him with a bat. And no one ever again attempted to speak or do low things in his presence.

Courage like this is the stuff of which heroes are made. When Patteson became a man, he was appointed Bishop of the South Sea Islands. In dealing with savage warriors, he showed the same splendid courage as at school. More than once an arrow was pointed at his breast. But, we read in the story of his life by Miss Charlotte M. Yonge, "it was his custom to look the archer full in the face with his bright smile, and that look of cheery confidence and good will made the weapon

drop." Dangers of every kind he met in this way. And he died as bravely as he had lived.

But a leader needs something more than courage. He must have knowledge. So the Lord gave Joshua a further charge: "Thou shalt not neglect the Lawbook I have given thee; but thou shalt ponder over it both day and night, so that thou mayest be careful to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

To win success in anything, we must study hard. The soldier must study the art of war, the doctor the practice of medicine, the farmer the science of agriculture, and the business man the laws of trade. To be a true leader of men, we must study everything that touches on life. But our chief study should be the Bible, which is the great Book of Life. It teaches us what God is, and what He would have us to do. It tells us how good men of old loved Him, and how they did His will. It shows us how Jesus lived, and how He died for us. It points out to us the way of life eternal. So, if we wish to lead others in the right way, we must study the Bible as earnestly as we study the rest of our lessons. And we must not only study it. We must, like Joshua, "be careful to do according to all that is written therein." We must love it, and live by it. For only then can we make our way prosperous, only then can we have good success.

With all Joshua's strength and courage, the conquest of Palestine was too hard a task for him to face alone. So the Lord left him a final word: "Have not I commanded thee? Be not afraid, nor

be dismayed! For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

It is a great thing for the soldier to know that his General is near him. At the battle of Waterloo, we are told, the Duke rode up to every critical point, and a glance of his eagle eye was worth an army of reserves. Even in the long line of modern battle the Commander is in constant touch with his men, cheering them on when they play the hero's part, and reinforcing them if their strength begins to fail.

So in the warfare of life our Leader is always with us. His last words to His disciples were: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations: and lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

David Livingstone was once at a place called Linyanti, on the river Zambesi. Behind him lay the African desert, and before him the river banks crowded with angry natives. Death seemed to be staring him in the face. But he sat down and wrote in his Journal: "I read that Jesus came and said, 'I am with you always, even to the end of the world.' It is the word of a gentleman of the most sacred and strictest honour, and there is an end on't." Next morning he crossed the river, and went bravely forward to meet the danger. The Lord was with him, as He had promised, and the danger passed. But Livingstone never forgot the experience. With these words as his guiding star, he journeyed on, through countless hardships, battling with cruelty, disease, and super-

stition, making the darkness of evil deeds flee before him, and shedding light wherever he went.

"Forth to the fight he fared,
High things and great he dared,
In his Master's might, to spread the Light,
Right faithfully wrought he.
He greatly loved—
He greatly lived—
And died right mightily."

JOHN OXENHAM.

XXXVI

THE SCARLET THREAD

JOSHUA was a brave man. But he was cautious as well as brave. So before leading the people across the Jordan, he sent two men to spy out the land round about Jericho. And they came to Jericho, and went to an inn kept by a woman called Rahab. And they lay down to rest.

Now it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold! there have come here this evening certain men of the children of Israel to spy out the land; and they are staying in Rahab's house." So the king sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men that have come to thee." But Rahab knew that the Lord was with the children of Israel. So she took the men, and brought them up to the flat roof of her house, and hid them among some stalks of flax she had laid out there to dry. And she told the king's messengers that the men had gone. And the messengers went in pursuit of them as far as the fords of the Jordan. And as they left the city, they shut the gate behind them.

Then just before bed-time Rahab went up to the roof, and spoke to the men, saying, "I know that the Lord hath given you this land, and that the terror of you is fallen upon all the inhabitants of the land; for the Lord your God is the one God in heaven above and on earth beneath, and He hath

destroyed all your enemies before you. Now, therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, ye also will deal kindly with me and my father's house, to save our lives from death." And they swore, saying, "We pledge you our lives that, when the Lord giveth us the land, we will deal kindly and truly with you."

Now Rahab's house was built on the city wall. So she passed a rope through one of the outside windows, and let the men down by the rope. And she said to them, "Get you to the mountainous country west of the city, and hide yourselves there three days, till the pursuers be returned from their search: then ye may go your own way." And they thanked her, and vowed once more to keep their oath. And they gave her a piece of scarlet thread, and said to her, "Behold! when we come into the land, thou shalt tie this cord of scarlet thread to the window by which thou didst let us down; and thou shalt gather to thy house thy father, and thy mother, and thy brothers, and thy sisters, with all that they have: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him! But if thou give away this business of ours, we will be free from the oath thou hast made us swear to thee." And she said, "According to your words, so be it!" And the men left her, and made their way to the mountainous country west of the city, and hid there three days, till the pursuers returned from their search. And the pursuers sought for them all along the line of the Jordan, but found them not.

When the three days were passed, the men rose up, and returned to the fords of the Jordan, and crossed, and came to Joshua, and told him all that had happened to them, and said, "Truly the Lord hath delivered all the land into our hands, and all the inhabitants of the land also quake in terror of us."

Then Joshua rose up early the next morning, and moved the camp to the banks of the Jordan. And they waited there three days till everything was ready for the passage. Then Joshua commanded the bearers of the Ark to lead the way. Now the Lord had promised Joshua that the people should cross the river on dry ground. So He caused a great landslide to take place at Adam, near Zarethan, sixteen miles north of Jericho. And the waters of the Jordan were dammed up. And the people crossed the river on dry ground.

When they were all passed over, the Lord bade Joshua choose twelve men, one of each tribe, to carry twelve stones from the bed of the Jordan, and set them up for a memorial on the place where they should lodge that night. So he chose twelve men, one of each tribe. And they took twelve stones from the bed of the Jordan, and placed them on their shoulders, and carried them to the place where they lodged that night, and set them up in a circle. And Joshua called the name of the place Gilgal, which means "Circle." And he said to the people, "When your children shall ask their fathers in the time to come, 'What is the meaning of these stones?' ye shall tell them, 'It is that Israel came over this Jordan on dry ground.'" He said also, "The Lord your God

hath dried up the waters of the Jordan before you, as He dried up the waters of the Red Sea, that all the peoples of the earth may know how mighty is the hand of the Lord your God, and that they may fear Him for ever."

Now as they encamped at Gilgal, the time of Passover came round. And the children of Israel celebrated the feast by eating cakes of unleavened bread and toasted ears of wheat grown in Palestine. And they rejoiced before the Lord with all their hearts. Next morning the manna ceased. And from that day onward they ate of the produce of the land.

It came to pass about this time, that Joshua was walking in the fields near Jericho. And he lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold! a man stood facing him, with his naked sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went up to him, and said, "Art thou for us, or for our enemies?" And he answered, "No! it is as captain of the Lord's host that I have now come." And Joshua saw that he was an angel of the Lord. So he fell upon his face to the earth, and worshipped, and said, "What speaketh my Lord unto His servant?" And the angel bade him put off his sandals from his feet, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. And Joshua did so. Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Behold! I have put Jericho, and its king and people, into thine hands. Do thou surround it, therefore, with armed men. And at the sound of the trumpet let them all shout together. And when they have shouted, the walls of the city shall fall down flat, and the men shall rush in, every one straight in front of him. And the city and all that

is in it shall be devoted as a sacrifice to the Lord."

Then Joshua went and did as the Lord had spoken. For seven days he surrounded the city with all the armed men of Israel. Then on the seventh day he gave the signal. And the priests raised a loud blast on the trumpet. And the people shouted with a great shout, so that the earth shook under it. And the walls of Jericho fell down flat, and the men rushed in, everyone straight in front of him. So they took the city, and burnt it with fire. And they offered up the cattle and goods as a sacrifice to the Lord. They slew also the men and women, young and old, with the edge of the sword. Of all the inhabitants of the city, they spared only Rahab and those that were with her in the house with the scarlet thread, according to the promise of the spies. And Rahab joined herself to the people of Israel, and married into their midst. So she became a mother in Israel. And in the fulness of time Jesus was born of her race.

XXXVII

HIDDEN EVIL

FROM Jericho a deep ravine cuts into the heart of Palestine. At the head of the pass stood Ai, a fortified town of some twelve thousand inhabitants. To win possession of Palestine, it was necessary first to capture Ai. So Joshua again sent men to spy out the land. And they went up the pass to Ai, and spied out the land around it. And they returned to Joshua, and said, "Make not all the people to toil up to Ai, but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite it, for the people that are in it are few." So Joshua sent about three thousand men against it. And they fought with the people of Ai, and were beaten before them. And there fell of them in the battle about thirty-six men. And the rest turned and fled. And the people of Ai pursued them from the city gate to the quarries at the foot of the pass. And many more of them were slain in the pursuit. And the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

Then Joshua rent his clothes, and put dust upon his head, and lay on the ground all day before the Lord. And he cried out, and said, "Ah, Lord God! why didst Thou ever bring this people over Jordan? Would that we had been content to dwell on the other side! What am I to say now that

Israel has turned its back on its enemies? For the Canaanites and all the other inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and surround us on every side, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what wilt Thou do for Thy great name?"

And the Lord answered Joshua, and said, "Why art thou fallen like this upon thy face? Get thee up! for Israel hath sinned in taking of the devoted thing, and putting it among its own stuff. Therefore the people turn their backs before their enemies, because they are become accursed. Up, then! consecrate the people; and tell them there is a devoted thing in their midst, and they cannot stand against their enemies until it is removed. Then in the morning thou shalt cast lots: and he that is taken by lot shall be burned with fire, he and all that he hath."

So Joshua called the people, and consecrated them, and told them all that the Lord had said to him. Then in the morning he rose up early, and brought the people together for the ordeal. And he cast lots among the tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken. Then he cast lots among the clans of Judah; and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. Then he cast lots among the households of Zerah; and the household of Zabdi was taken. Then he cast lots among the men of the household of Zabdi; and Achan the grandson of Zabdi was taken.

Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I pray thee, render glory to the Lord God of Israel; and make confession of what thou hast done: hide it not from me!" And Achan answered Joshua, and said, "Of a truth I have sinned against the Lord

God of Israel, and have done thus and thus: I saw among the spoil a fine Babylonian mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight; and I coveted them, and took them; and behold! they are hid in the middle of my tent, the silver and gold lying under the mantle."

So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and found the spoil hid in the middle of it, the silver and gold lying under the mantle. And they took it, and brought it to Joshua. And he and the elders of Israel laid it before the Lord. Then Joshua said to Achan, "As thou hast brought trouble upon us, so shall the Lord this day bring trouble upon thee." And they led Achan and his household to the ravine beyond Jericho. And they burned them with fire. Then they raised a great cairn of stones over them as a witness to their punishment. And they called the place, *The Valley of Achor,* that is, "The Valley of Trouble," the name by which it is called to this day.

Evil does not often remain hidden. Some unexpected word or act will give away the secret. The Greek poet Ibycus was passing through a desert place near Corinth, when he was set upon and slain by a band of robbers. A flock of cranes happened to be flying over the spot, and the dying poet called on them to avenge him. Soon afterwards the robbers were in the open theatre at Corinth. Suddenly the cranes appeared, and one of the band cried out, "Behold the avengers of Ibycus!" He and his companions were seized, and in due course condemned to death. And the

cranes of Ibycus became a proverb for the finding out of sin.

It is not pleasant to be found out. But there is something worse than that. It is when sin finds us out. And this is what the Bible warns us against. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

The Greeks had a fable about the avenging Furies tracking the sinner like blood-hounds, catching him up, torturing him, dragging him "to ruin unredeemed." So sin finds us out. It haunts us night and day. It will not allow us a moment to rest in peace. It taints the memory, stings the conscience, weakens the will, and plagues the body. Unless we can throw it off, it will dog us to death.

Some of you have read Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. You remember how sin found out the guilty King and Queen. They tried to cover up the traces of their guilt by shedding blood and still more blood. But the stain of the blood could not be wiped out. "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." Nor would the ghosts of the slain men leave them. They sat with them at table. They terrified them by dreams as they slept. A knock on the door smote them like the summons of doom. The very stones and trees seemed to speak to them of blood. And at last they welcomed death as the only means of quieting "a mind full of scorpions."

The true way of escape is to make a clean breast of evil. Then God will pardon us for Jesus' sake. We may still have to suffer for the wrong we have done. But we shall enjoy a wonderful peace and comfort of mind. We shall even be able to sing with the Psalmist:

"While I kept silence, my bones did moulder
Through my groaning all day long;
For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me:
My sap was turned into summer drought.

"Then I acknowledged my sin to Thee,
And my guilt I hid no more;
I said, 'I'll make known to the Lord my transgression,'
And Thou removedst the guilt of my sin.

"To the wicked are many sorrows;
But he that trusts in the Lord—mercy shall compass him round.
So rejoice in the Lord, and exult, ye righteous:
And sing out for joy, all ye that are upright in heart!"

XXXVIII

STORMING A FORTRESS

THE camp being purged from hidden evil, Joshua could renew the attack on Ai with a good heart. For the Lord had promised that He would deliver the city and all its inhabitants into his hand. This time he mustered his full force of thirty thousand men. Of these he sent a detachment of five thousand picked troops to lie in ambush by night on a wooded knoll a little west of Ai, between that city and Bethel. He himself was to attack in front the next morning, and to fall back, so as to draw the men of Ai from their base. The troops in ambush were then to dash upon the city, and take them on the rear. Thus the men of Ai would be caught between two fires, and defeated with ease.

So it fell out. The five thousand men took up their position that night on the wooded knoll west of Ai, while Joshua and the rest of the troops lay in the valley of Achor. Then early in the morning he marched up the pass, and attacked Ai in front. When the king of Ai saw him approaching, he led out his army for battle. After a short skirmish, Joshua and his men made as if they were beaten, and fell back over the hilly country east of Ai. The men of Ai pressed on in pursuit of them, leaving the city open. Then Joshua stretched out his

javelin towards Ai. The troops in ambush caught the signal, and at once dashed upon the city, took it, and set it on fire. When Joshua and his men saw the smoke of the city, they halted, and turned upon their pursuers. In an instant the troops that had captured Ai took them on the rear. So the men of Ai were hemmed in on both sides, and could flee neither this way nor that. And the Israelites cut them down where they stood. Thus Joshua won possession of the gateway to Palestine.

In Bunyan's *Holy War* the forces of King Shaddai fail in their first attack on the rebellious city of Mansoul. But Prince Emmanuel comes in person to lead them, and the attack is renewed, the gate battered down, and the citadel won. So in the warfare of life we seem at times to be beaten back. But with Christ in command we are sure to conquer in the end. For God has given Him the kingdom. And "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

Therefore let us fight on, strong in faith and hope, like:

"One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

ROBERT BROWNING.

XXXIX

CHOPPERS OF WOOD

ABOUT seven miles southwest of Ai, on a low terraced hill, stood Gibeon, another old Palestinian fortress, held by a people called Hivites. When the men of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they were very much alarmed. But instead of fighting with the Israelites, they tried a clever trick. They got together some of their number and dressed them in ragged old clothes, and patched-up shoes. Then they gave them wine-skins, all cracked and torn, the holes tied with broken bits of string, and mouldy wallets filled with dry, crumbled bread. And they set them on asses, laden with old sacks, and sent them to the Israelite camp at Gilgal.

When they arrived at Gilgal, they went to Joshua, and bowed down before him, and said, "We are thy servants: we pray thee, make a league with us!" And Joshua asked them, "Who are ye? and whence come ye?" And they said, "Thy servants are come from a very far country because of the fame of Jehovah thy God; for we have heard of all that He did in Egypt, as well as to Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. And our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, 'Take provisions with you, and go to meet them, and say,

We are your servants: we pray you, make a league with us!' So we took provisions, and came to meet you. On the day we set out, we took this bread of ours hot out of our houses; and now, behold! it is dry and crumbled. And these wine-skins were fresh when we filled them; and behold! they are all torn. And these clothes and shoes of ours were new when we put them on; and behold! they have become old by reason of the very long journey."

And Joshua believed what the men had said, and he made a league with them. And the princes of Israel took a solemn oath to keep the league. But three days afterwards they heard that the men were near neighbours. And there was great anger in the camp, and the people wished to slay them. But Joshua and the princes stood between them and the people, saying, "We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel; therefore we may not touch them. But this we will do: we will make them choppers of wood and drawers of water for all the camp. So shall they pay for their treachery, and yet the anger of the Lord will not fall upon us for the oath which we sware unto them."

The people agreed to this. So Joshua called the men, and asked them, "Why have ye deceived us, saying, 'We live very far off from you,' when ye dwell in our midst?" And they answered, "We did it because we were sore afraid for our lives. And now, behold! we are in thy power: do to us as it seemeth good and right to thee!" So Joshua made them choppers of wood and drawers of water for all the camp.

It was very menial work. But the men of

Gibeon threw their heart into it. And they did the work so well that they were afterwards made servants in the Temple, whose special duty it was to look after the altar of the Lord.

We sometimes chafe at lowly tasks. But many of our greatest men have had to put their hands to work as lowly as that of the Gibeonites. Both Lincoln and Garfield were choppers of wood and drawers of water in the old Log Cabin. And it was just because they did this work so well that they had the chance of doing finer work in days to come. "All service ranks the same with God." And we can make it a real service for Him if we do it with our might. Richard Cadbury of Birmingham used often to say, "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well." And someone else has said, "If a Christian is only a shoeblack, he should be the best shoeblack in the city."

A splendid story is told of an old Scottish blacksmith. A farmer had brought him a team of horses to be shod. As the work went on, the farmer grew impatient, and said, "That will do; that will do." But the brave man hammered away, saying, "It won't do; I'm doing it for eternity."

This is the spirit in which we should do all our work, at school or out of it. Then even the humblest service will be as sacred in God's sight as the holiest service in the Church or at the altar.

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask,—
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

JOHN KEBLE.

XL

THE LORD'S BATTLE

THE strongest fortress in Palestine was Jerusalem. It towered up, surrounded by massive walls, on a precipitous rock, called Zion, 2,400 feet above the sea. All the cities around owed allegiance to its king, Adoni-zedek. So when he heard that the men of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, he called out four vassal kings to fight against Gibeon. And they gathered together their forces, and marched against Gibeon, and besieged it.

Now when the men of Gibeon saw the danger they were in, they sent messengers to the Israelite camp at Gilgal, saying, "Come up to us quickly, and help us!" And Joshua mustered all his men, and marched out that same evening to the help of Gibeon. And the Lord came to him, and said, "Be not afraid of thine enemies! for I have delivered them into thy hands; there shall not a man of them be able to stand against thee."

So Joshua and his men marched on all that night, and reached the enemies' camp early in the morning. And they fell upon them suddenly. And the Lord delivered them into their hands. And the Israelites won a great victory at the gates of Gibeon. And they inflicted heavy slaughter upon

their enemies, and pursued them down the pass of Beth-horon, towards the plain of the Philistines. And as they fled, the Lord sent down great hail stones, which dashed upon them, and slew more of them than the Israelites had slain with the sword. And Joshua prayed that the sun might not set that day till he had made a full end of them. And so it was. Ere the sun set, he had swept them right through the pass to Makkedah, in the heart of the Philistine plain. And there he slew the five kings, as they hid in a cave. And he scattered their forces to the winds. And those that remained alive fled for safety to the fortified cities in the plain.

That night the Israelite army encamped at Makkedah. So complete had been the victory that "none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel." And they sang songs of thanksgiving to the Lord for the help He had given them. Joshua also sang a song in which he boldly pictured the sun and moon standing still until the people had avenged themselves of their enemies. Then in the morning they passed on to Libnah, and from there to Lachish and Hebron and other cities that had taken part in the battle. And they captured all of them, and razed them to the ground, and slew their kings and people with the edge of the sword. "All these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord God fought for Israel. And Joshua and all the men of Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal."

We sometimes think that it was only in those far-off days that the Lord God fought for His people. But He still fights on the side of justice

and truth. Often He helps us, as He helped Israel, by wind and storm. When the Spanish Armada was bearing down on the English coast, Drake and his men fought a great fight for freedom. But it was God's hurricane that drove the enemy off the seas. In like manner the forces of Nature were continually at war with Napoleon. As he said himself, "Water, air, and fire, all Nature, and nothing but Nature, have been my enemies." And during the great European war God threw in these forces, time after time, on behalf of the Allies.

But He helps us chiefly by inspiring us with faith and courage. As we all know, what counts most in winning battles is *morale*. It was by keeping up their *morale* that the Allies won in the end; it was through the loss of their *morale* that the enemy went down to defeat. Now *morale* is just made up of faith and courage: faith in a good cause, and courage to fight for it. And nothing gives us a finer *morale* than trust in God. It is the same in the war with evil. Through the *morale* which comes of trust we shall win. For God is with those who put their trust in Him. And His good angels are about us, renewing our strength, and holding our courage high.

"In dazzling day or blinding night
God ne'er forgets us in the fight;
His glorious angels will abide
If we but clasp them at our side:
The hand that beckons them is Prayer,
And Faith the clasp that holds them there."

E. R. Sill.

XLI

A GREEN OLD AGE

THE battle of Gibeon was followed by another great battle at the waters of Merom in Upper Galilee. Here Joshua met and defeated Jabin, king of Hazor, and the combined forces of the Northern Canaanites. The whole land of Palestine now fell to be divided between the tribes of Israel. And the chiefs of the different tribes came forward to claim their portions. Among these was Caleb, the son of Jephunneh.

Forty-five years ago Caleb had gone with Joshua to spy out the land. He had stood by him against the ten faithless spies. And Moses had promised them both a share in the good land. So now Caleb drew near to Joshua, and said:

"Thou knowest what the Lord spake to Moses the man of God concerning me in Kadesh, when I was forty years old. Moses sent me from Kadesh to spy out the land; and I brought him back the word that was in mine heart. Even though my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt with their ill report of the land, I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses sware to me on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which thy foot hath trodden shall be an inheritance to thee and thy children for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord.' And

now, behold! the Lord hath kept me alive these forty-five years, as He promised, and I am this day eighty-five years old. Yet I am just as strong this day as I was on the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, so my strength is now, both for war and for the daily round of work. Therefore give me the hill country of Hebron, which the Lord promised me on that day. And I will go up and attack the sons of Anak that dwell there. Perchance the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out, as the Lord said I should."

Then Joshua blessed Caleb, and gave him the hill country of Hebron as his inheritance. And Caleb mustered his clansmen, and marched against Hebron, and drove out the sons of Anak that dwelt in it, and won it for himself and his children. Then he pressed south to Kirjath-sepher, and took it, with the help of his gallant nephew Othniel, the son of Kenaz. And he gave Othniel his daughter Achsah to wife. So he made sure his inheritance in the land.

It is fine to see an old man so full of youthful spirit. And there have been many others like him. We think of John Wesley, at the age of eighty-seven, still riding about the country, preaching and writing, busy with good works of every sort, and praying, "Lord, let me not live to be useless"; of Gladstone and Rainy, almost as old as he, and just as active, taking up the heaviest duties, and carrying them through with boyish energy; of Oliver Wendell Holmes, on his seventieth birthday, telling his friends, "To be seventy years young is far more cheerful and hopeful than to be forty years old"; of men and women we have

known ourselves, keen in mind, interested in all that is going on, working away at congenial tasks, and finding life good and joyful to the end.

We should all like to have a green old age like theirs. And the secret is not far to seek. Caleb says he wholly followed the Lord his God. The word is a very expressive one. It means, he "filled full" or "gathered his full strength" to follow the Lord his God. Like a brave seaman, he crowded on all sail, and bore along after his Admiral, swerving neither to the right hand nor to the left.

This is what kept Caleb young. And this is what keeps all of us young. If we wholly follow the Lord our God, we shall be saved from the hot passions and sins that sap our strength, and make us old before our time; we shall be able to do our work with heartiness and success; our minds will be kept clear and calm, free from the worries that kill men; we shall be surrounded by hosts of good friends; we shall find life rich in interest; and as it draws to a close, we shall be filled with the glad hope of a still better life in the world to come.

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

ROBERT BROWNING.

XLII

A GRAND FAREWELL

JOSHUA had now finished his task. He was well stricken in years, and felt he must soon go the way of all the earth. So he called the people to Shechem, and reminded them of the great goodness the Lord had shown them, from the day on which he led their father Abraham over the river Euphrates even until now. Then he said to them, "And now fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth. Or if it seem evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve: whether it be the gods your fathers served on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell! But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

And the people answered and said, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods! For it was the Lord our God that brought us up from the land of Egypt, and kept us in all the way that we went, and saved us from the peoples through whose midst we passed, and drove from before us the Amorites that dwelt in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord; for He is our God."

Then Joshua said to them, "Ye cannot serve the Lord; for He is a holy God, and a jealous God, who will not forgive your trespasses and sins. There-

fore, if ye forsake the Lord, and serve other gods, He will turn and destroy you, after that He hath done you good." And the people answered and said, "Nay! but we will serve the Lord." And Joshua said to them, "Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve Him." And they said, "We are." And he said, "Then put away the strange gods that are among you, and turn your hearts unto the Lord God of Israel!" And they said, "The Lord our God will we serve, and to His voice will we hearken."

So Joshua made a covenant with the people, and bound them by solemn oaths. And he took a great stone, and set it up under an oak that stood near the altar at Shechem. And he said to all the people, "Behold! this stone shall be for a witness against you, lest ye deny your God." Then he sent them away, everyone to his own home.

Not long afterwards Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten. He was buried at Timnath-serah, in the hill country of Ephraim, which was the portion of the land allotted to him. And the children of Israel continued to serve the Lord their God all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, and who knew all the work that the Lord had wrought for Israel through him.

"So when a great man dies,
For years beyond our ken,
The light he leaves behind him lies
Upon the paths of men."

LONGFELLOW.

THE END

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